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# Stanford CS224W: A General Perspective on Graph Neural Networks

CS224W: Machine Learning with Graphs

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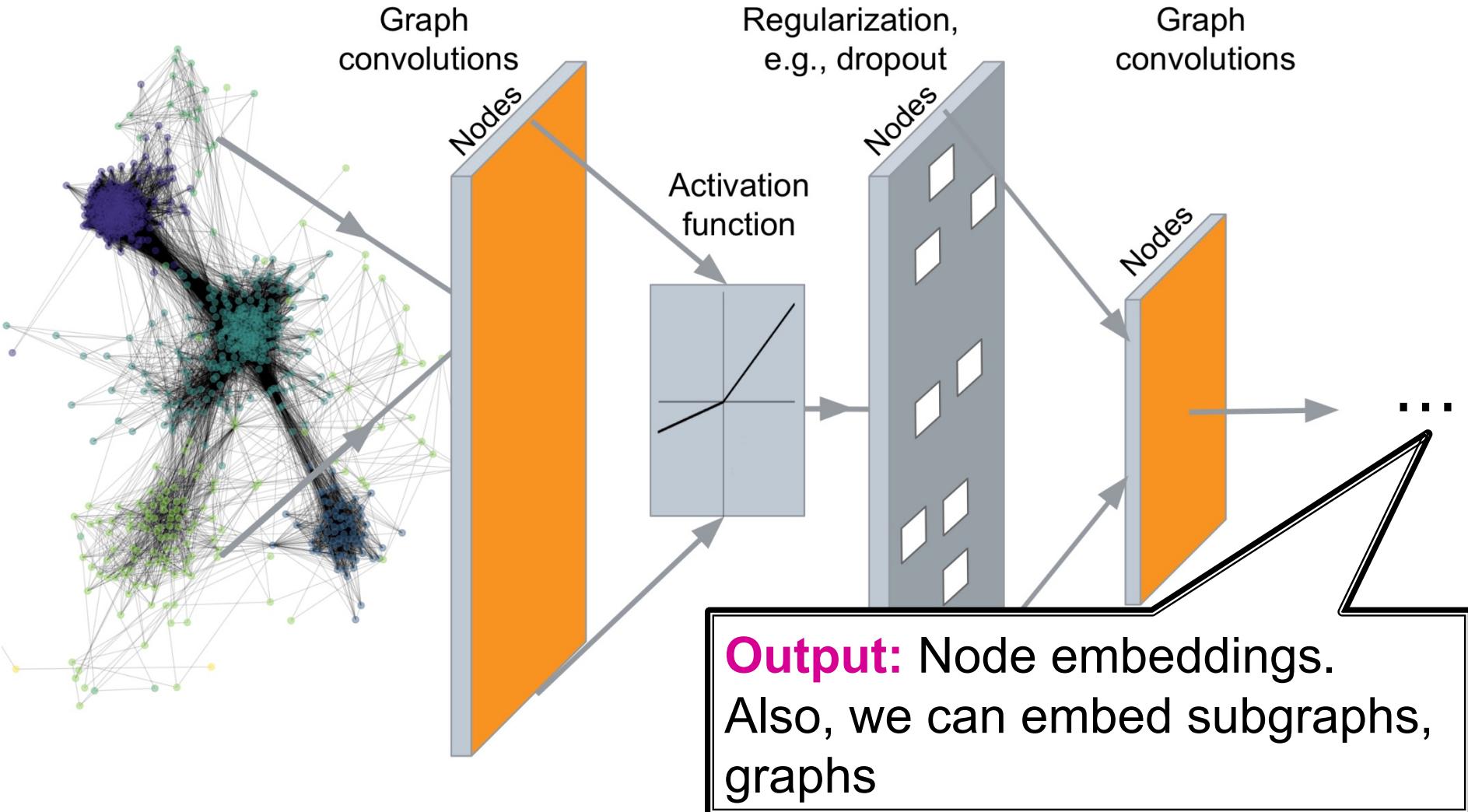
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# Announcements

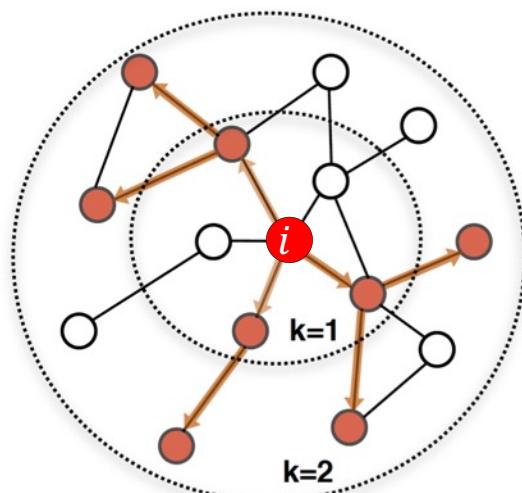
- **Homework 1 will be released today by 9PM on our course website**
- **Homework 1:**
  - Due Thursday, 10/17 (2 weeks from now)
  - TAs will hold a recitation session for HW 1:
    - Time: Wednesday (10/9), 1:30pm
    - Location: Zoom, link will be posted on Ed
    - Session will be recorded
- **Colab 1:**
  - Due Next Thurs 10/10 (1 week from today)

# Recap: Deep Graph Encoders

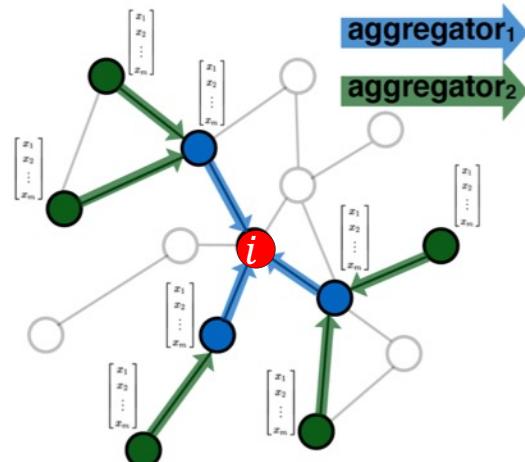


# Recap: Graph Neural Networks

Idea: Node's neighborhood defines a computation graph



Determine node computation graph

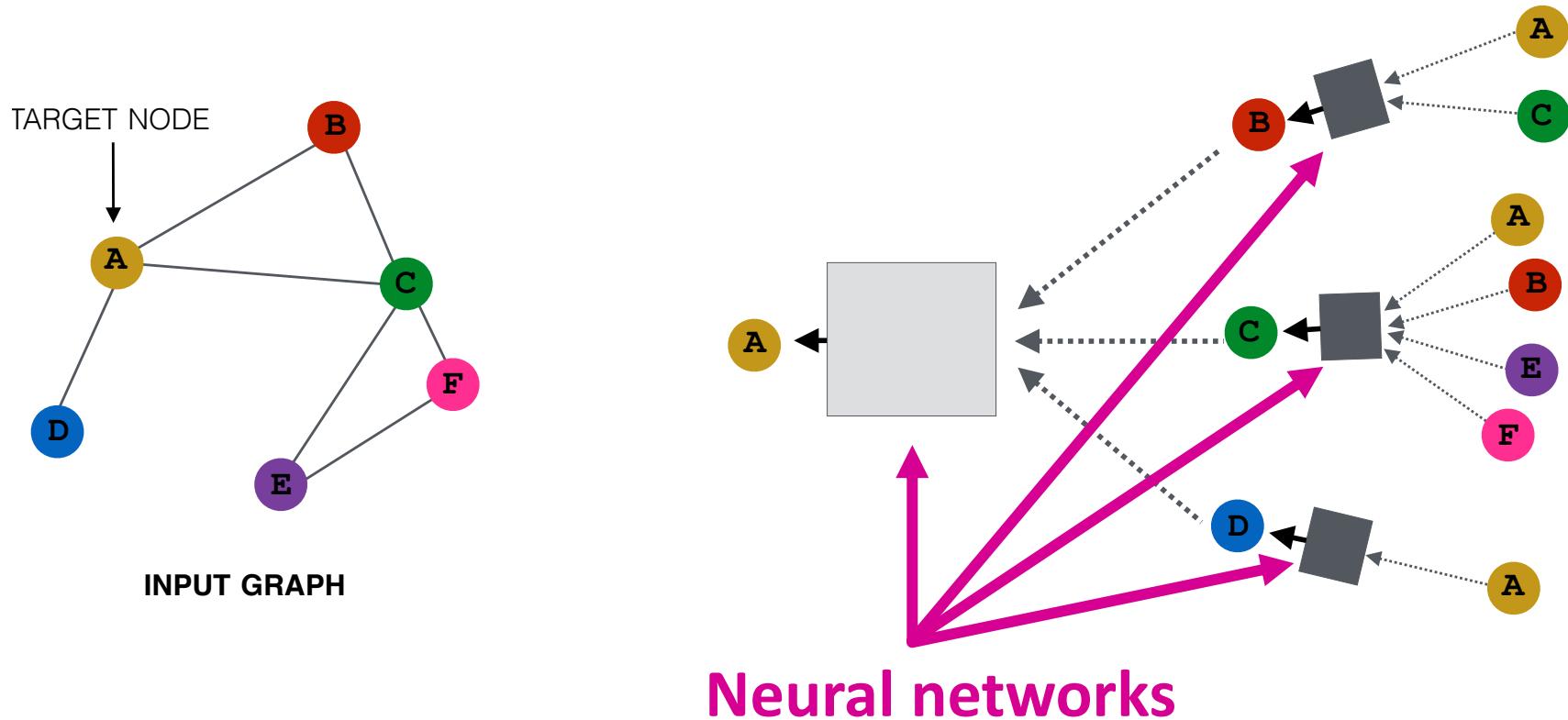


Propagate and transform information

Learn how to propagate information across the graph to compute node features

# Recap: Aggregate from Neighbors

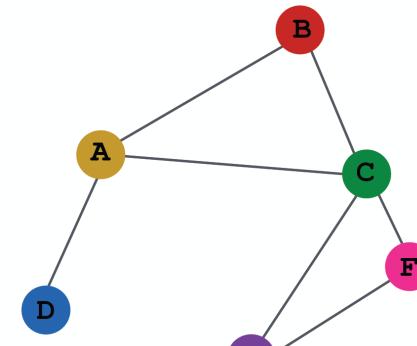
- **Intuition:** Nodes aggregate information from their neighbors using neural networks



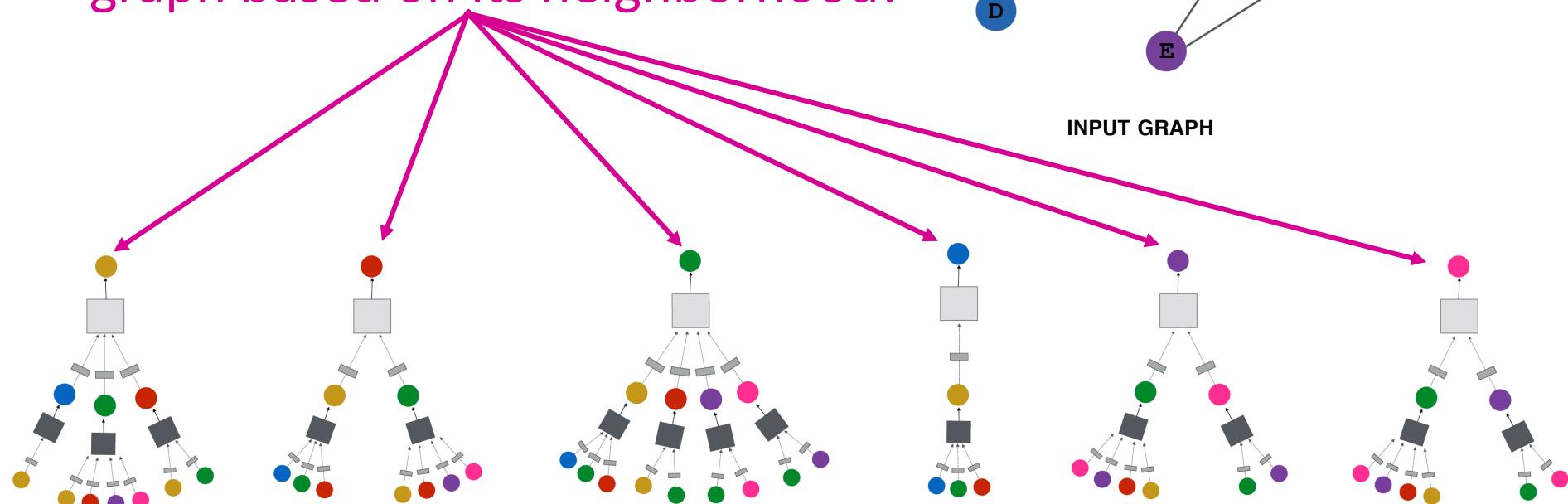
# Recap: Aggregate Neighbors

- **Intuition:** Network neighborhood defines a computation graph

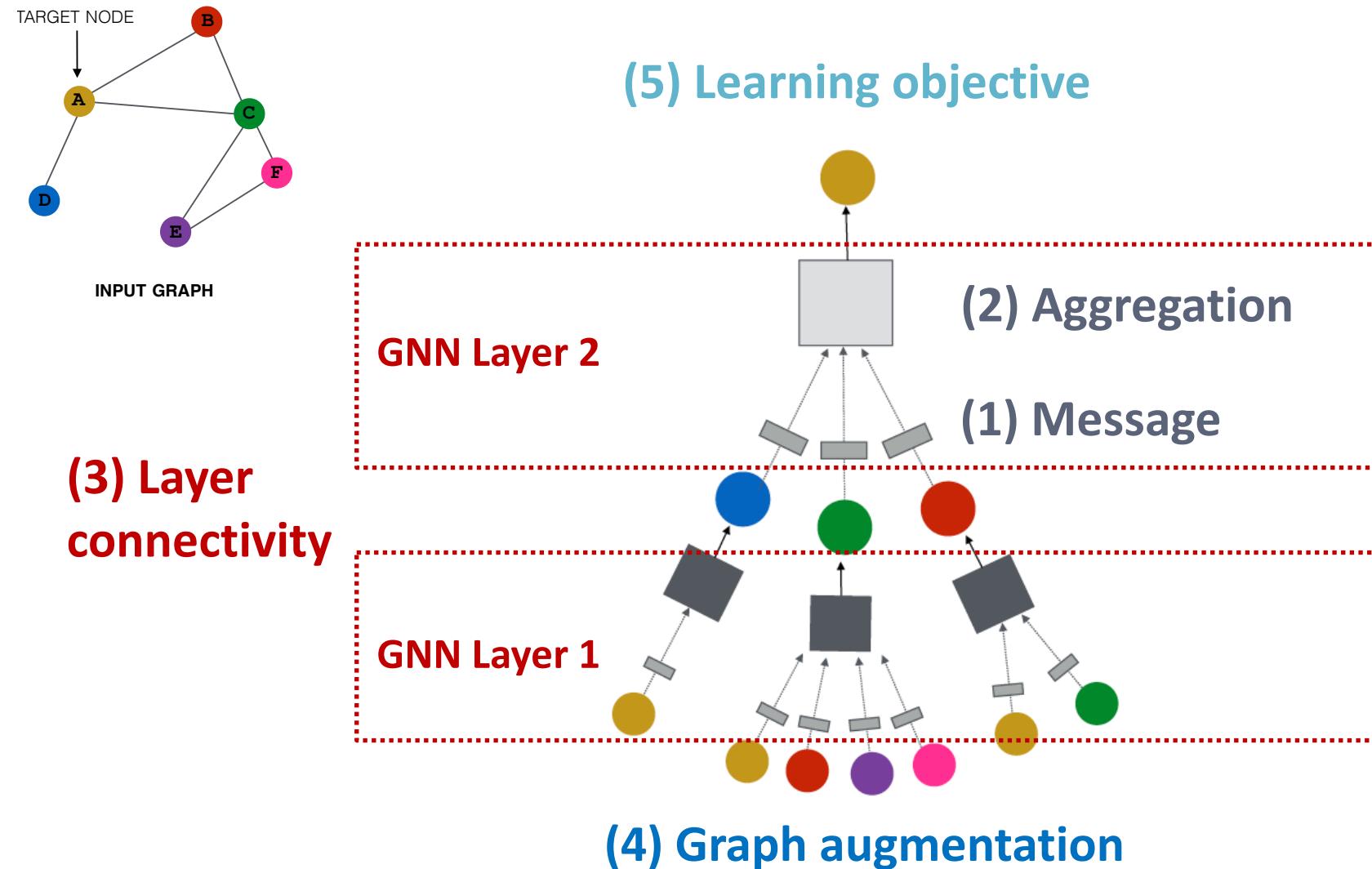
Every node defines a computation graph based on its neighborhood!



INPUT GRAPH



# Today: A General GNN Framework



# Stanford CS224W: A Single Layer of a GNN

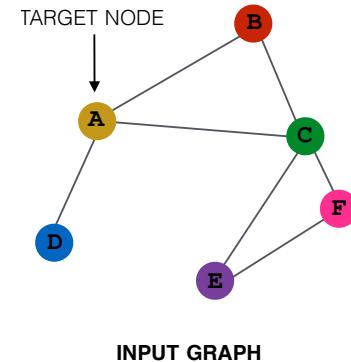
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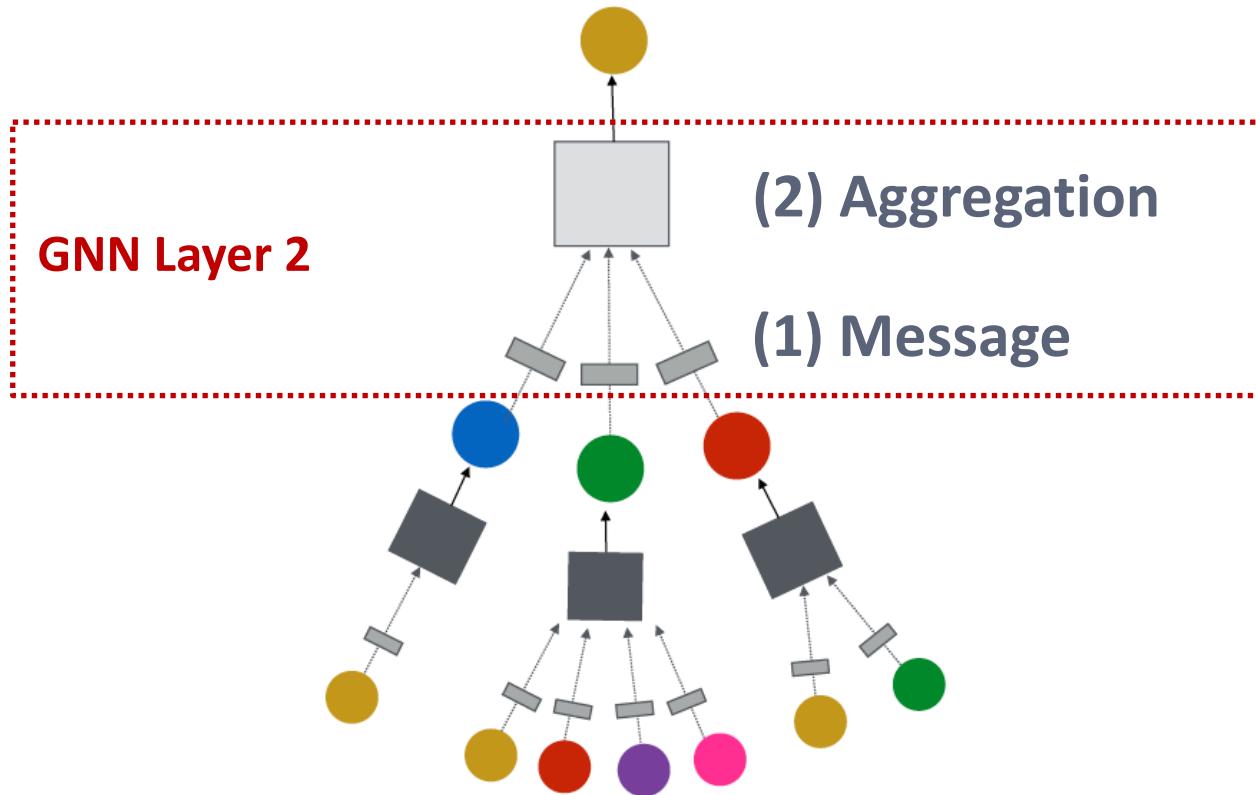


# A GNN Layer



**GNN Layer = Message + Aggregation**

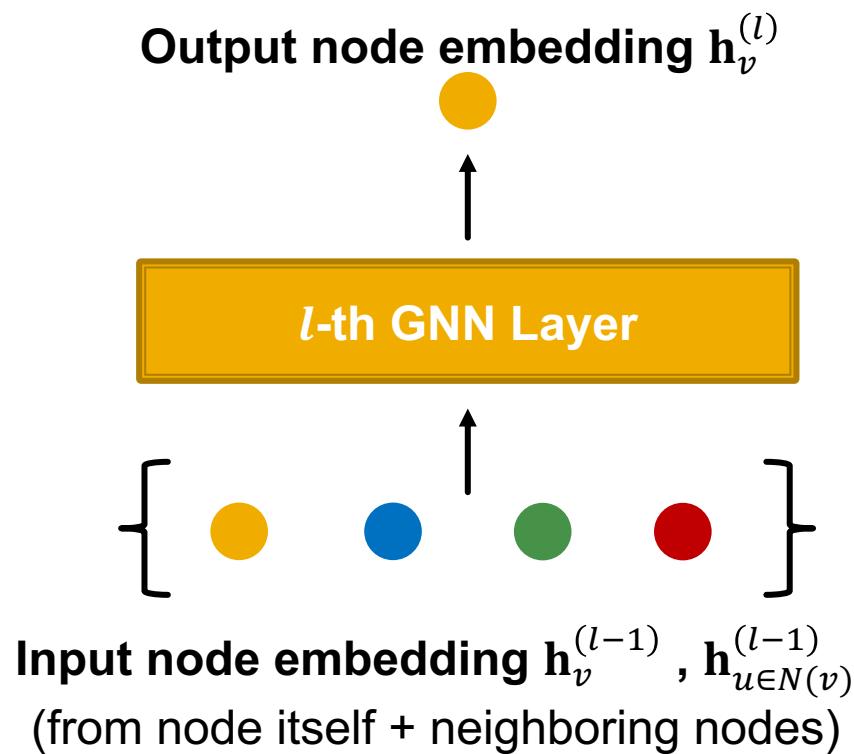
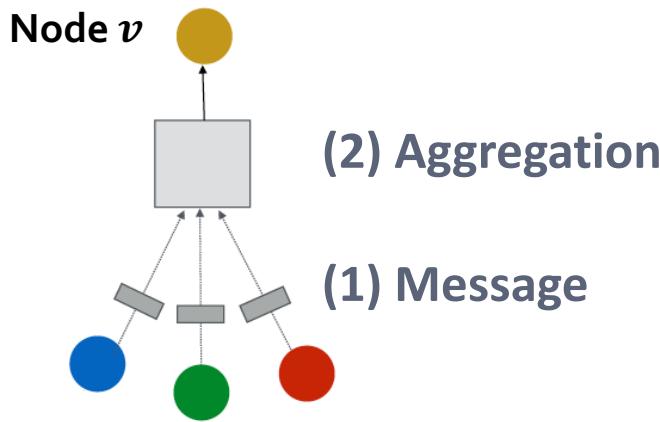
- Different instantiations under this perspective
- GCN, GraphSAGE, GAT, ...



# A Single GNN Layer

## ■ Idea of a GNN Layer:

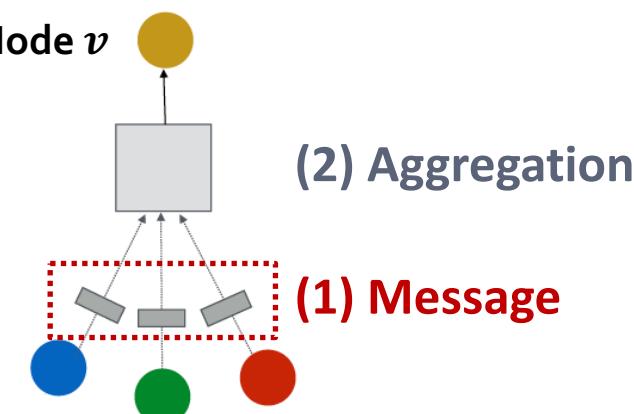
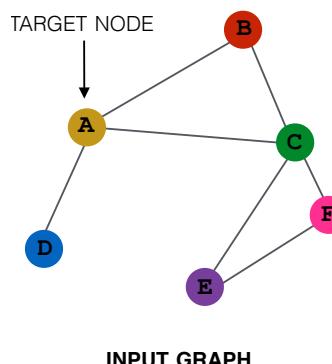
- Compress a set of vectors into a single vector
- Two-step process:
  - (1) Message
  - (2) Aggregation



# Message Computation

## ■ (1) Message computation

- **Message function:**  $\mathbf{m}_u^{(l)} = \text{MSG}^{(l)}(\mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)})$
- **Intuition:** Each node will create a message, which will be sent to other nodes later
- **Example:** A Linear layer  $\mathbf{m}_u^{(l)} = \mathbf{W}^{(l)}\mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}$ 
  - Multiply node features with weight matrix  $\mathbf{W}^{(l)}$



# Message Aggregation

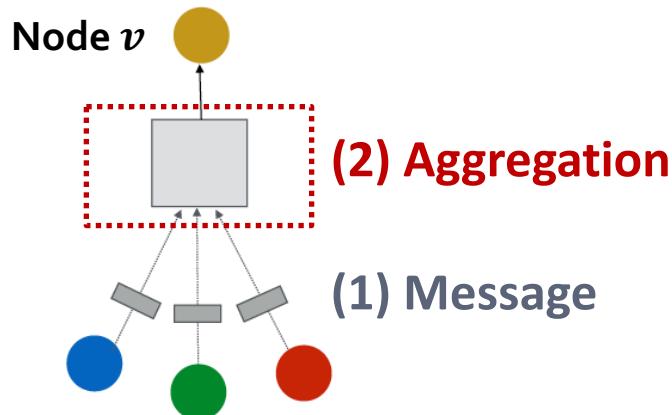
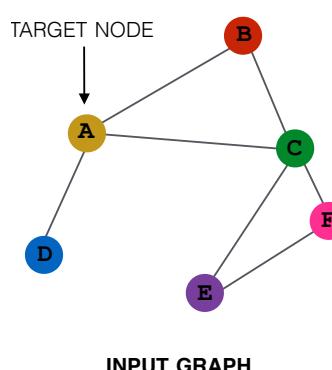
## ■ (2) Aggregation

- **Intuition:** Node  $v$  will aggregate the messages from its neighbors  $u$ :

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \text{AGG}^{(l)} \left( \left\{ \mathbf{m}_u^{(l)}, u \in N(v) \right\} \right)$$

- **Example:** Sum( $\cdot$ ), Mean( $\cdot$ ) or Max( $\cdot$ ) aggregator

- $\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \text{Sum}(\{\mathbf{m}_u^{(l)}, u \in N(v)\})$



# Message Aggregation: Issue

- **Issue:** Information from node  $v$  itself **could get lost**
  - Computation of  $\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)}$  does not directly depend on  $\mathbf{h}_v^{(l-1)}$
- **Solution:** Include  $\mathbf{h}_v^{(l-1)}$  when computing  $\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)}$ 
  - **(1) Message:** compute message from node  $v$  itself
    - Usually, a **different message computation** will be performed



$$\mathbf{m}_u^{(l)} = \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}$$



$$\mathbf{m}_v^{(l)} = \mathbf{B}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_v^{(l-1)}$$

- **(2) Aggregation:** After aggregating from neighbors, we can aggregate the message from node  $v$  itself
  - Via **concatenation or summation**

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \text{CONCAT} \left( \text{AGG} \left( \left\{ \mathbf{m}_u^{(l)}, u \in N(v) \right\} \right), \boxed{\mathbf{m}_v^{(l)}} \right)$$

First aggregate from neighbors

Then aggregate from node itself

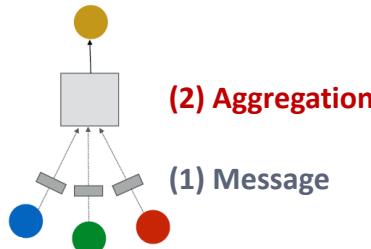
# A Single GNN Layer

## ■ Putting things together:

- **(1) Message**: each node computes a message  
$$\mathbf{m}_u^{(l)} = \text{MSG}^{(l)}\left(\mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}\right), u \in \{N(v) \cup v\}$$
- **(2) Aggregation**: aggregate messages from neighbors

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \text{AGG}^{(l)}\left(\left\{\mathbf{m}_u^{(l)}, u \in N(v)\right\}, \mathbf{m}_v^{(l)}\right)$$

- **Nonlinearity (activation)**: Adds expressiveness
  - Often written as  $\sigma(\cdot)$ . Examples: ReLU( $\cdot$ ), Sigmoid( $\cdot$ ) , ...
  - Can be added to **message or aggregation**



# Activation (Non-linearity)

Apply activation to  $i$ -th dimension of embedding  $\mathbf{x}$

- Rectified linear unit (ReLU)

$$\text{ReLU}(\mathbf{x}_i) = \max(\mathbf{x}_i, 0)$$

- Most commonly used

- Sigmoid

$$\sigma(\mathbf{x}_i) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-\mathbf{x}_i}}$$

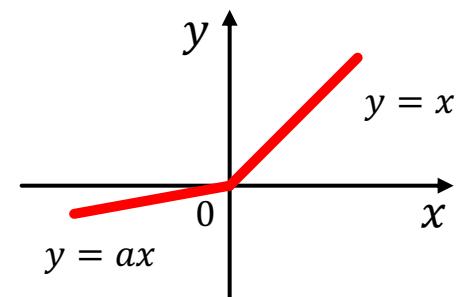
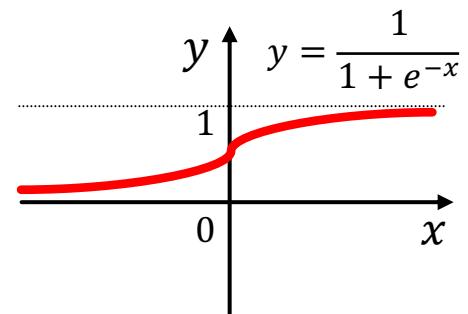
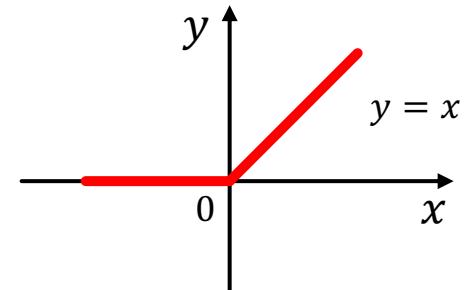
- Used only when you want to restrict the range of your embeddings

- Parametric ReLU

$$\text{PReLU}(\mathbf{x}_i) = \max(\mathbf{x}_i, 0) + a_i \min(\mathbf{x}_i, 0)$$

$a_i$  is a trainable parameter

- Empirically performs better than ReLU



# Classical GNN Layers: GCN (1)

- (1) Graph Convolutional Networks (GCN)

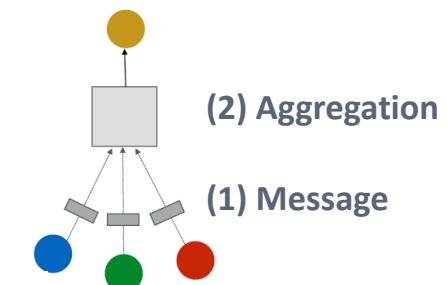
$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \sigma \left( \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \sum_{u \in N(v)} \frac{\mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}}{|N(v)|} \right)$$

- How to write this as Message + Aggregation?

**Message**

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \sigma \left( \sum_{u \in N(v)} \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \frac{\mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}}{|N(v)|} \right)$$

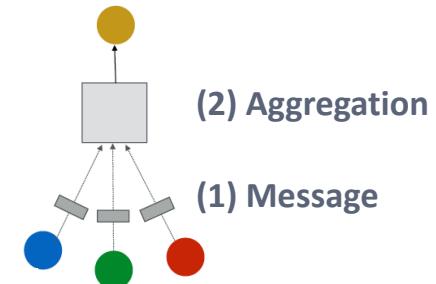
**Aggregation**



# Classical GNN Layers: GCN (2)

## ■ (1) Graph Convolutional Networks (GCN)

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \sigma \left( \sum_{u \in N(v)} \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \frac{\mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}}{|N(v)|} \right)$$



### ■ Message:

- Each Neighbor:  $\mathbf{m}_u^{(l)} = \frac{1}{|N(v)|} \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}$

**Normalized by node degree**  
(In the GCN paper they use a slightly different normalization)

### ■ Aggregation:

- **Sum** over messages from neighbors, then apply activation
- $\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \sigma \left( \text{Sum} \left( \{\mathbf{m}_u^{(l)}, u \in N(v)\} \right) \right)$

In GCN the input graph is assumed to have self-edges that are included in the summation.

# Classical GNN Layers: GraphSAGE

- (2) GraphSAGE

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \sigma \left( \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \cdot \text{CONCAT} \left( \mathbf{h}_v^{(l-1)}, \text{AGG} \left( \left\{ \mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}, \forall u \in N(v) \right\} \right) \right) \right)$$

- Two-stage aggregation

- Stage 1: Aggregate from node neighbors

$$\mathbf{h}_{N(v)}^{(l)} \leftarrow \text{AGG} \left( \left\{ \mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}, \forall u \in N(v) \right\} \right)$$

- Stage 2: Further aggregate over the node itself

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} \leftarrow \sigma \left( \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \cdot \text{CONCAT}(\mathbf{h}_v^{(l-1)}, \mathbf{h}_{N(v)}^{(l)}) \right)$$

- Message is computed within the  $\text{AGG}(\cdot)$
- How to write this as Message + Aggregation?

# GraphSAGE Neighbor Aggregation

- **Mean:** Take a weighted average of neighbors

$$\text{AGG} = \sum_{u \in N(v)} \frac{\mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}}{|N(v)|}$$

AggregationMessage computation

- **Pool:** Transform neighbor vectors and apply symmetric vector function  $\text{Mean}(\cdot)$  or  $\text{Max}(\cdot)$

$$\text{AGG} = \text{Mean}(\{\text{MLP}(\mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}), \forall u \in N(v)\})$$

AggregationMessage computation

- **LSTM:** Apply LSTM to reshuffled of neighbors

$$\text{AGG} = \text{LSTM}([\mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}, \forall u \in \pi(N(v))])$$

Aggregation

# GraphSAGE: L<sub>2</sub> Normalization

## ■ $\ell_2$ Normalization:

- **Optional:** Apply  $\ell_2$  normalization to  $\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)}$  at every layer
- $\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} \leftarrow \frac{\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)}}{\|\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)}\|_2} \quad \forall v \in V \text{ where } \|u\|_2 = \sqrt{\sum_i u_i^2} \text{ ( $\ell_2$ -norm)}$
- Without  $\ell_2$  normalization, the embedding vectors have different scales ( $\ell_2$ -norm) for vectors
- In some cases (not always), normalization of embedding results in performance improvement
- After  $\ell_2$  normalization, all vectors will have the same  $\ell_2$ -norm

# Classical GNN Layers: GAT (1)

## ■ (3) Graph Attention Networks

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \sigma\left(\sum_{u \in N(v)} \alpha_{vu} \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}\right)$$

Attention weights

## ■ In GCN / GraphSAGE

- $\alpha_{vu} = \frac{1}{|N(v)|}$  is the **weighting factor (importance)** of node  $u$ 's message to node  $v$
- $\Rightarrow \alpha_{vu}$  is defined **explicitly** based on the **structural properties** of the graph (node degree)
- $\Rightarrow$  All neighbors  $u \in N(v)$  are **equally important** to node  $v$

# Classical GNN Layers: GAT (1)

## ■ (3) Graph Attention Networks

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \sigma(\sum_{u \in N(v)} \alpha_{vu} \mathbf{m}_u^{(l)})$$

Attention weights

## ■ In GCN / GraphSAGE

- $\alpha_{vu} = \frac{1}{|N(v)|}$  is the **weighting factor (importance)** of node  $u$ 's message to node  $v$
- $\Rightarrow \alpha_{vu}$  is defined **explicitly** based on the **structural properties** of the graph (node degree)
- $\Rightarrow$  All neighbors  $u \in N(v)$  are **equally important** to node  $v$

# Classical GNN Layers: GAT (2)

## ■ (3) Graph Attention Networks

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \sigma(\sum_{u \in N(v)} \alpha_{vu} \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)})$$

Attention weights

**Not all node's neighbors are equally important**

- **Attention** is inspired by cognitive attention.
- The **attention**  $\alpha_{vu}$  focuses on the important parts of the input data and fades out the rest.
  - **Idea:** the NN should devote more computing power on that small but important part of the data.
  - Which part of the data is more important depends on the context and is learned through training.

# Graph Attention Networks

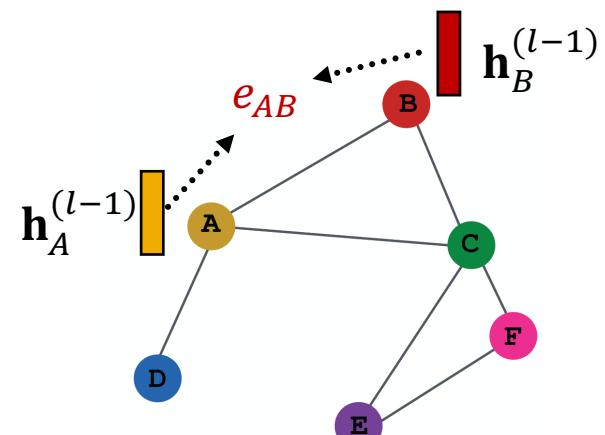
Can we do better than simple neighborhood aggregation?

Can weighting factors  $\alpha_{vu}$  be learned?

- **Goal:** Specify arbitrary importance to different neighbors of each node in the graph
- **Idea:** Compute embedding  $h_v^{(l)}$  of each node in the graph following an **attention strategy**:
  - Nodes attend over their neighborhoods' message
  - Implicitly specifying different weights to different nodes in a neighborhood

# Attention Mechanism (1)

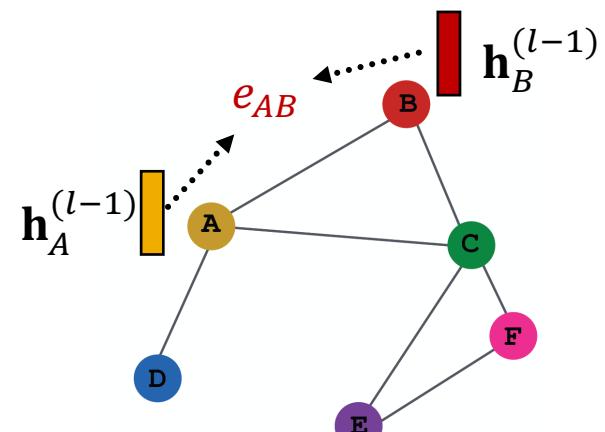
- Let  $\alpha_{vu}$  be computed as a byproduct of an **attention mechanism**  $a$ :
  - (1) Let  $a$  compute **attention coefficients**  $e_{vu}$  across pairs of nodes  $u, v$  based on their messages:
$$e_{vu} = a(\mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}, \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_v^{(l-1)})$$
    - $e_{vu}$  indicates the importance of  $u$ 's message to node  $v$



$$e_{AB} = a(\mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_A^{(l-1)}, \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_B^{(l-1)})$$

# Attention Mechanism (1)

- Let  $\alpha_{vu}$  be computed as a byproduct of an **attention mechanism**  $a$ :
  - (1) Let  $a$  compute **attention coefficients**  $e_{vu}$  across pairs of nodes  $u, v$  based on their messages:
$$e_{vu} = a(\mathbf{m}_u^{(l)}, \mathbf{m}_v^{(l)})$$
    - $e_{vu}$  indicates the importance of  $u$ 's message to node  $v$



$$e_{AB} = a(\mathbf{m}_A^{(l)}, \mathbf{m}_B^{(l)})$$

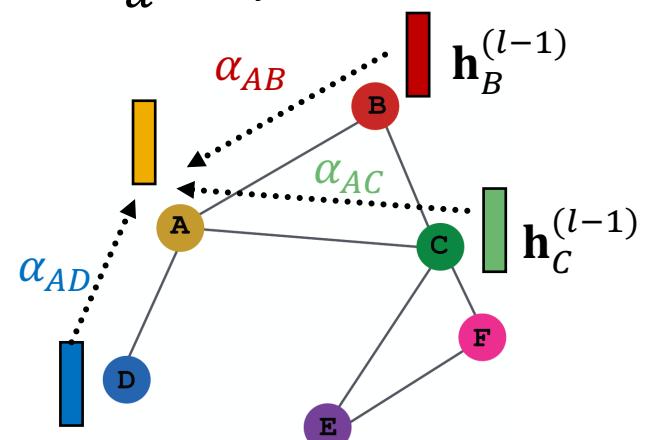
# Attention Mechanism (2)

- **Normalize**  $e_{vu}$  into the **final attention weight**  $\alpha_{vu}$ 
  - Use the **softmax** function, so that  $\sum_{u \in N(v)} \alpha_{vu} = 1$ :
$$\alpha_{vu} = \frac{\exp(e_{vu})}{\sum_{k \in N(v)} \exp(e_{vk})}$$
- **Weighted sum** based on the **final attention weight**  $\alpha_{vu}$ :

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \sigma(\sum_{u \in N(v)} \alpha_{vu} \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)})$$

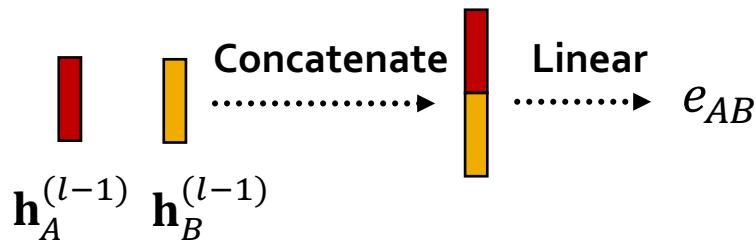
**Weighted sum using**  $\alpha_{AB}$ ,  $\alpha_{AC}$ ,  $\alpha_{AD}$ :

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{h}_A^{(l)} = \sigma(&\alpha_{AB} \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_B^{(l-1)} + \alpha_{AC} \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_C^{(l-1)} + \\ &\alpha_{AD} \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_D^{(l-1)})\end{aligned}$$



# Attention Mechanism (3)

- What is the form of attention mechanism  $a$ ?
  - The approach is agnostic to the choice of  $a$ 
    - E.g., use a simple single-layer neural network
      - $a$  have trainable parameters (weights in the Linear layer)



$$\begin{aligned} e_{AB} &= a \left( \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_A^{(l-1)}, \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_B^{(l-1)} \right) \\ &= \text{Linear} \left( \text{Concat} \left( \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_A^{(l-1)}, \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_B^{(l-1)} \right) \right) \end{aligned}$$

- Parameters of  $a$  are trained jointly:
  - Learn the parameters together with weight matrices (i.e., other parameter of the neural net  $\mathbf{W}^{(l)}$ ) in an end-to-end fashion

# Attention Mechanism (4)

- **Multi-head attention:** Stabilizes the learning process of attention mechanism
  - Create **multiple attention scores** (each replica with a different set of parameters):

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)}[1] = \sigma(\sum_{u \in N(v)} \alpha_{vu}^1 \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)})$$

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)}[2] = \sigma(\sum_{u \in N(v)} \alpha_{vu}^2 \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)})$$

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)}[3] = \sigma(\sum_{u \in N(v)} \alpha_{vu}^3 \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)})$$

- **Outputs are aggregated:**
  - By concatenation or summation
  - $\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \text{AGG}(\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)}[1], \mathbf{h}_v^{(l)}[2], \mathbf{h}_v^{(l)}[3])$

# Benefits of Attention Mechanism

- **Key benefit:** Allows for (implicitly) specifying **different importance values ( $\alpha_{vu}$ ) to different neighbors**
- **Computationally efficient:**
  - Computation of attentional coefficients can be parallelized across all edges of the graph
  - Aggregation may be parallelized across all nodes
- **Storage efficient:**
  - Sparse matrix operations do not require more than  $O(V + E)$  entries to be stored
  - **Fixed** number of parameters, irrespective of graph size
- **Localized:**
  - Only **attends over local network neighborhoods**
- **Inductive capability:**
  - It is a shared *edge-wise* mechanism
  - It does not depend on the global graph structure

# Stanford CS224W: GNN Layers in Practice

CS224W: Machine Learning with Graphs

Jure Leskovec, Stanford University

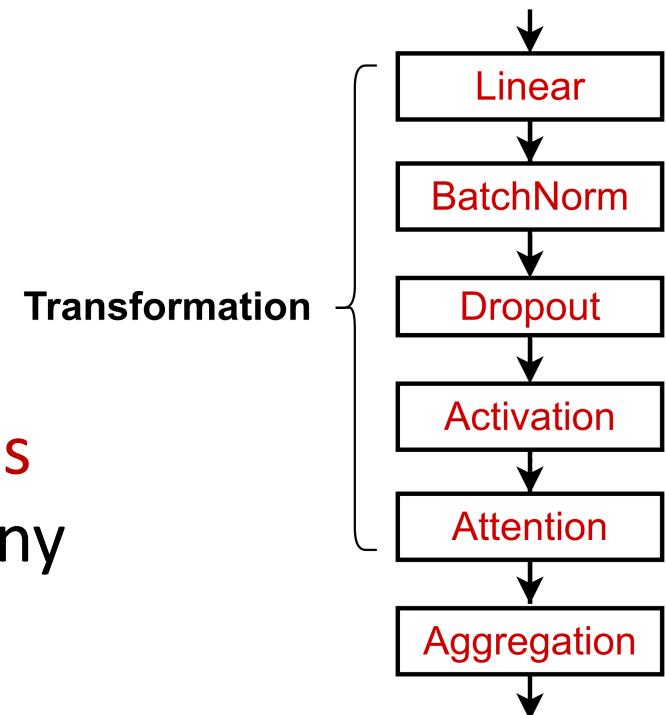
<http://cs224w.stanford.edu>



# GNN Layer in Practice

- In practice, these classic GNN layers are a great starting point
  - We can often get better performance by considering a general GNN layer design
  - Concretely, we can include modern deep learning modules that proved to be useful in many domains

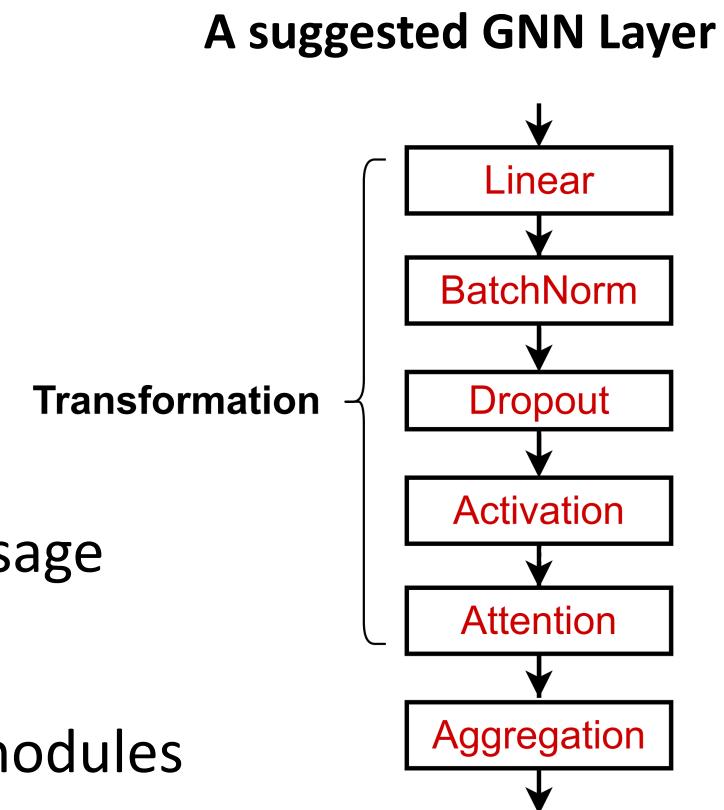
A suggested GNN Layer



# GNN Layer in Practice

- Many modern deep learning modules can be incorporated into a GNN layer

- Batch Normalization:
  - Stabilize neural network training
- Dropout:
  - Prevent overfitting
- Attention/Gating:
  - Control the importance of a message
- More:
  - Any other useful deep learning modules



# Batch Normalization

- **Goal:** Stabilize neural networks training
- **Idea:** Given a batch of inputs (node embeddings)
  - Re-center the node embeddings into zero mean
  - Re-scale the variance into unit variance

**Input:**  $\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times D}$   
 $N$  node embeddings

**Trainable Parameters:**  
 $\gamma, \beta \in \mathbb{R}^D$

**Output:**  $\mathbf{Y} \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times D}$   
Normalized node embeddings

**Step 1:**  
**Compute the  
mean and variance  
over  $N$  embeddings**

$$\mu_j = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \mathbf{x}_{i,j}$$

$$\sigma_j^2 = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (\mathbf{x}_{i,j} - \mu_j)^2$$

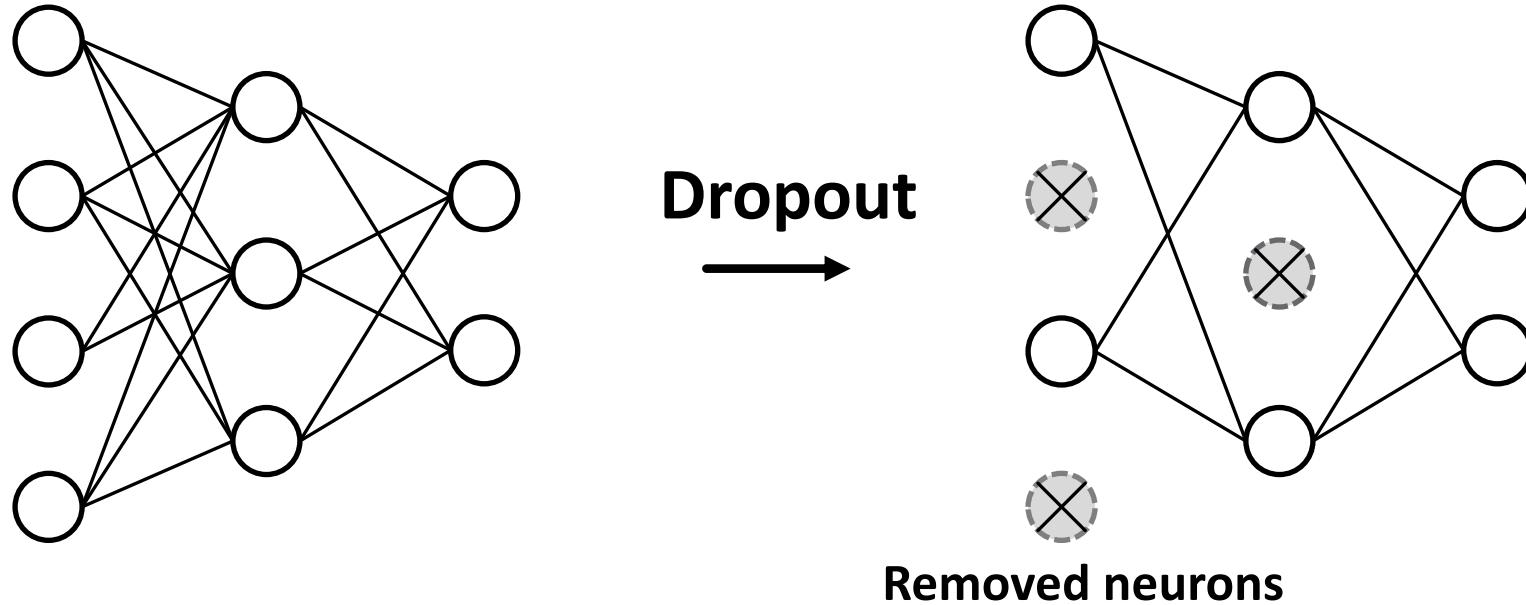
**Step 2:**  
**Normalize the feature  
using computed mean  
and variance**

$$\hat{\mathbf{x}}_{i,j} = \frac{\mathbf{x}_{i,j} - \mu_j}{\sqrt{\sigma_j^2 + \epsilon}}$$

$$\mathbf{y}_{i,j} = \gamma_j \hat{\mathbf{x}}_{i,j} + \beta_j$$

# Dropout

- **Goal:** Regularize a neural net to prevent overfitting.
- **Idea:**
  - **During training:** with some probability  $p$ , randomly set neurons to zero (turn off)
  - **During testing:** Use all the neurons for computation

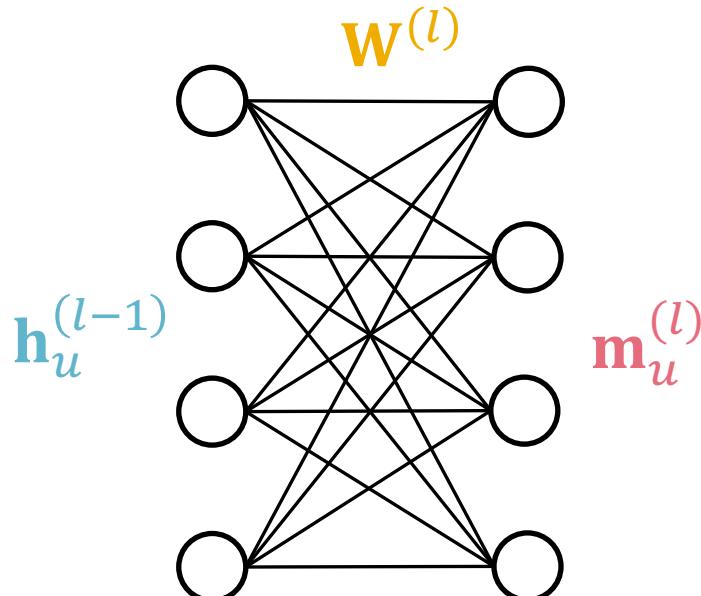


# Dropout for GNNs

- In GNN, Dropout is applied to **the linear layer in the message function**

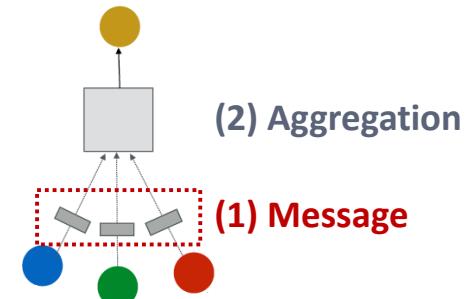
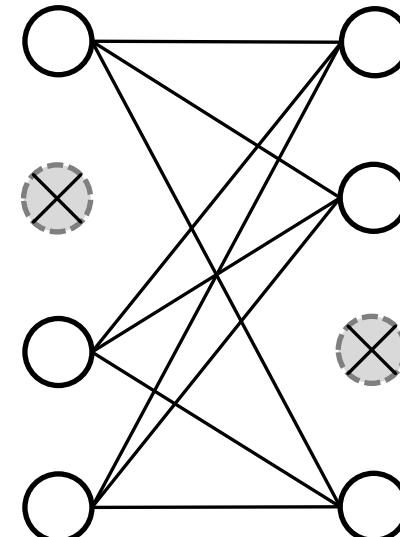
- A simple message function with linear layer:

$$\mathbf{m}_u^{(l)} = \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}$$



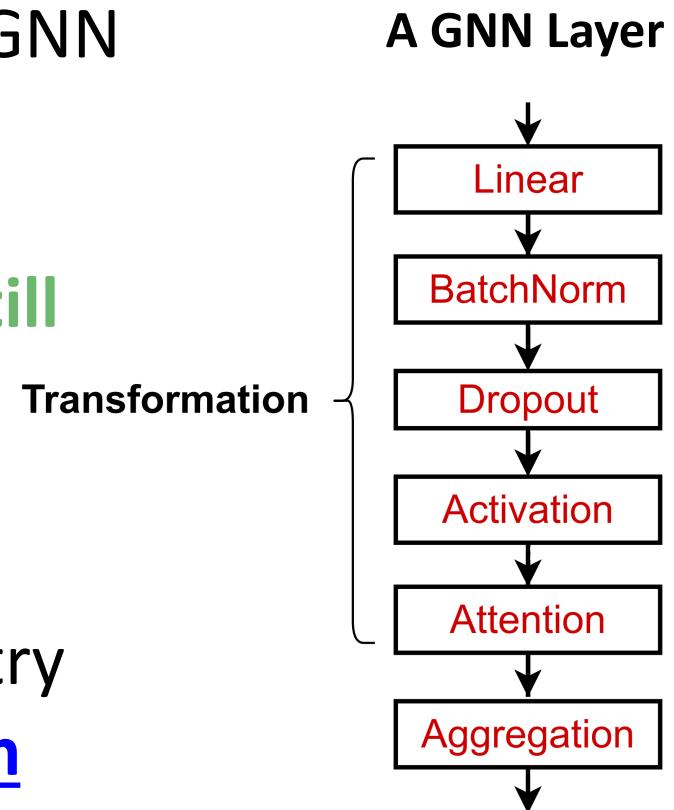
Visualization of a linear layer

Dropout  
→



# GNN Layer in Practice

- **Summary:** Modern deep learning modules can be included into a GNN layer for better performance
- **Designing novel GNN layers is still an active research frontier!**
- **Suggested resources:** You can explore diverse GNN designs or try out your own ideas in [GraphGym](#)



# Stanford CS224W: Stacking Layers of a GNN

CS224W: Machine Learning with Graphs

Jure Leskovec, Stanford University

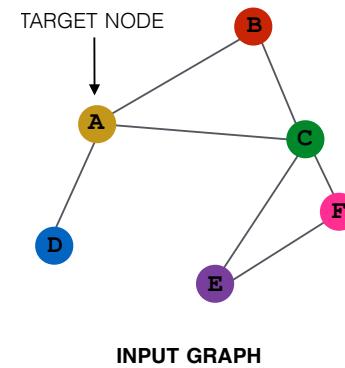
<http://cs224w.stanford.edu>



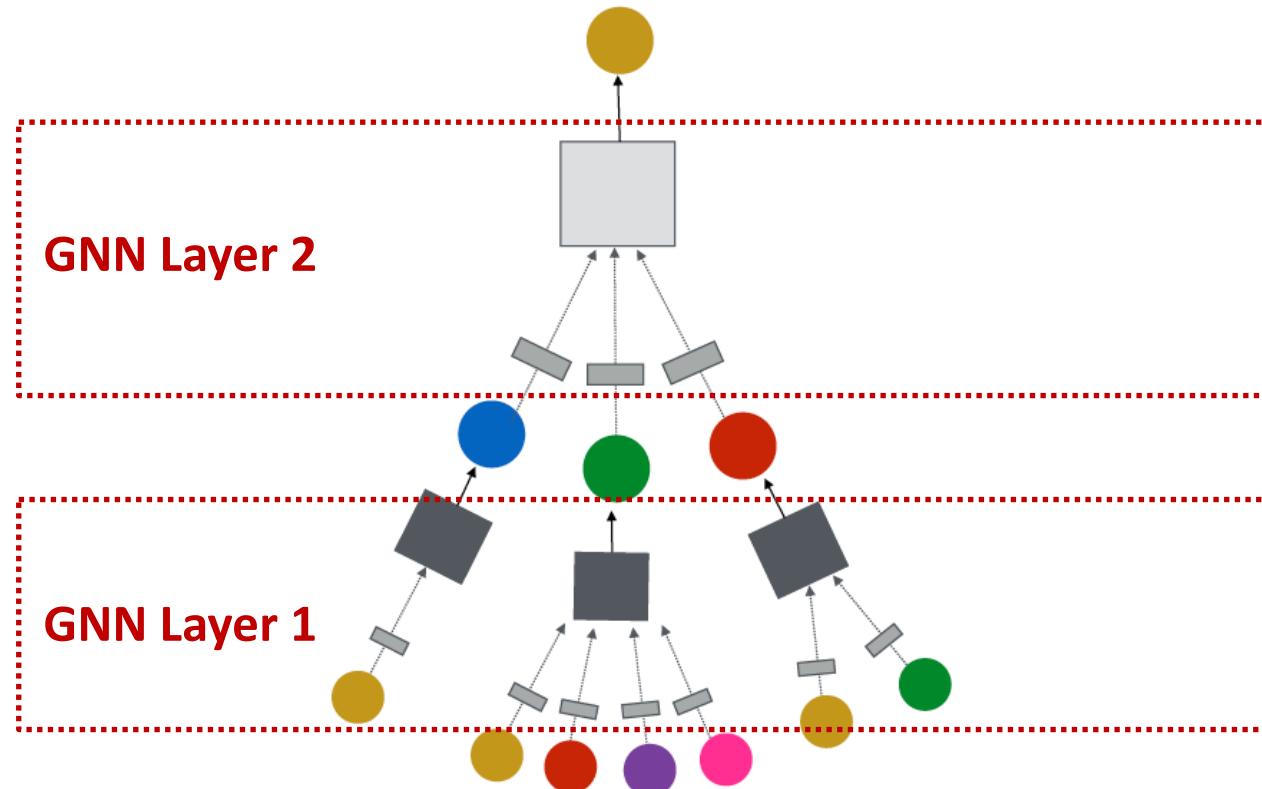
# Stacking GNN Layers

How to connect GNN layers into a GNN?

- Stack layers sequentially
- Ways of adding skip connections

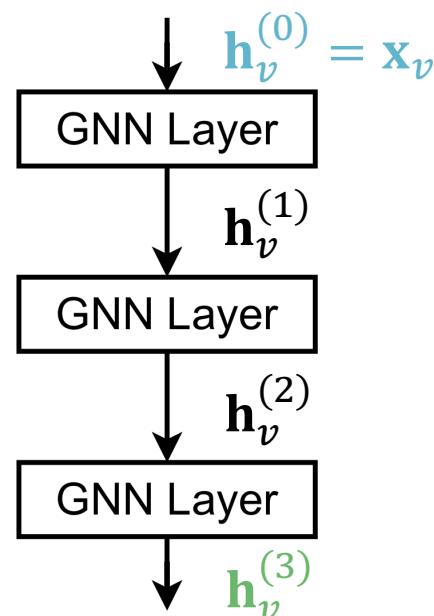


(3) Layer connectivity



# Stacking GNN Layers

- **How to construct a Graph Neural Network?**
  - **The standard way:** Stack GNN layers sequentially
  - **Input:** Initial raw node feature  $\mathbf{x}_v$
  - **Output:** Node embeddings  $\mathbf{h}_v^{(L)}$  after  $L$  GNN layers



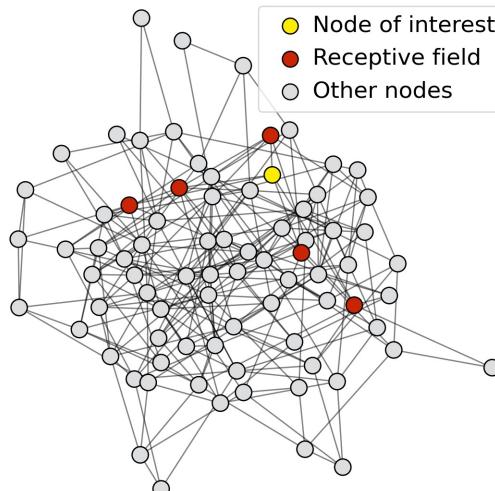
# The Over-smoothing Problem

- **The issue of stacking many GNN layers**
  - GNN suffers from **the over-smoothing problem**
- **The over-smoothing problem: all the node embeddings converge to the same value**
  - This is bad because we **want to use node embeddings to differentiate nodes**
- **Why does the over-smoothing problem happen?**

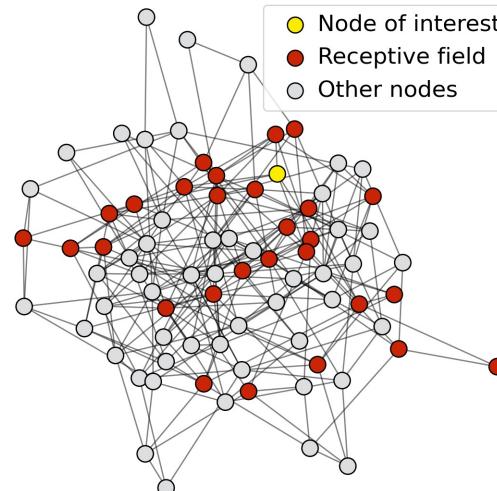
# Receptive Field of a GNN

- **Receptive field:** the set of nodes that determine the embedding of a node of interest
  - In a  $K$ -layer GNN, each node has a receptive field of  $K$ -hop neighborhood

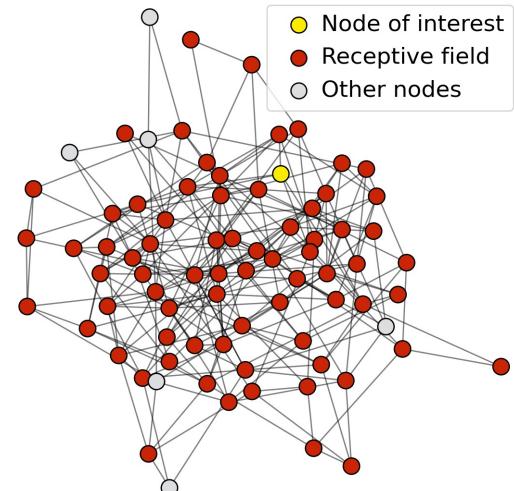
Receptive field for  
1-layer GNN



Receptive field for  
2-layer GNN



Receptive field for  
3-layer GNN

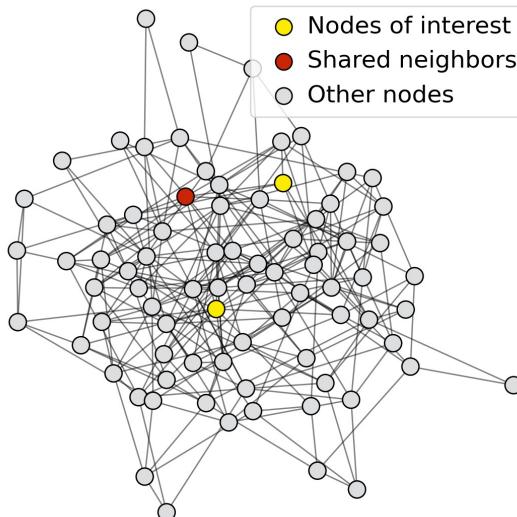


# Receptive Field of a GNN

- **Receptive field overlap for two nodes**
  - **The shared neighbors quickly grows** when we increase the number of hops (num of GNN layers)

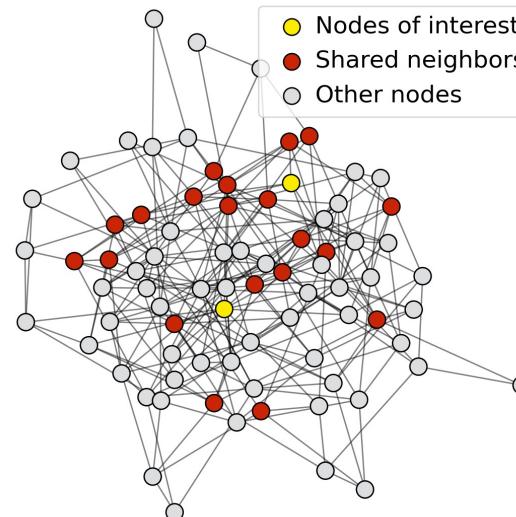
## 1-hop neighbor overlap

Only 1 node



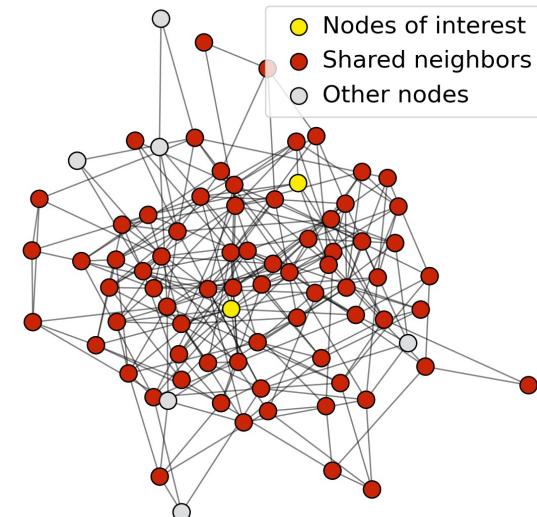
## 2-hop neighbor overlap

About 20 nodes



## 3-hop neighbor overlap

Almost all the nodes!



# Receptive Field & Over-smoothing

- We can explain over-smoothing via the notion of the receptive field
  - We know the embedding of a node is determined by its receptive field
    - If two nodes have highly-overlapped receptive fields, then their embeddings are highly similar
  - Stack many GNN layers → nodes will have highly-overlapped receptive fields → node embeddings will be highly similar → suffer from the over-smoothing problem
- Next: how do we overcome over-smoothing problem?

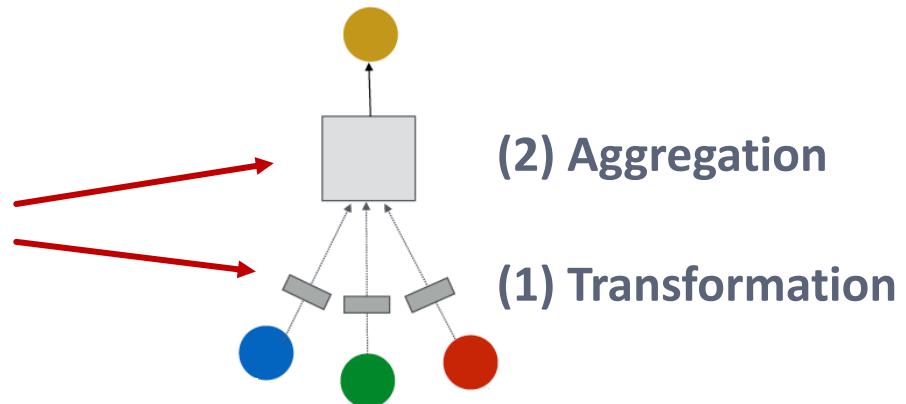
# Design GNN Layer Connectivity

- **What do we learn from the over-smoothing problem?**
- **Lesson 1: Be cautious when adding GNN layers**
  - Unlike neural networks in other domains (CNN for image classification), **adding more GNN layers do not always help**
  - **Step 1:** Analyze the necessary receptive field to solve your problem. E.g., by computing the diameter of the graph
  - **Step 2:** Set number of GNN layers  $L$  to be a bit more than the receptive field we like. **Do not set  $L$  to be unnecessarily large!**
- **Question:** How to enhance the expressive power of a GNN, **if the number of GNN layers is small?**

# Expressive Power for Shallow GNNs

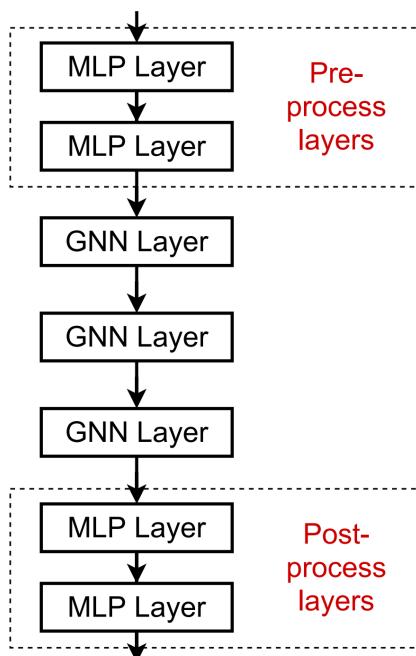
- How to make a shallow GNN more expressive?
- Solution 1: Increase the expressive power within each GNN layer
  - In our previous examples, each transformation or aggregation function only include one linear layer
  - We can make aggregation / transformation become a deep neural network!

If needed, each box could include a 3-layer MLP



# Expressive Power for Shallow GNNs

- How to make a shallow GNN more expressive?
- Solution 2: Add layers that do not pass messages
  - A GNN does not necessarily only contain GNN layers
    - E.g., we can add **MLP layers** (applied to each node) before and after GNN layers, as **pre-process layers** and **post-process layers**



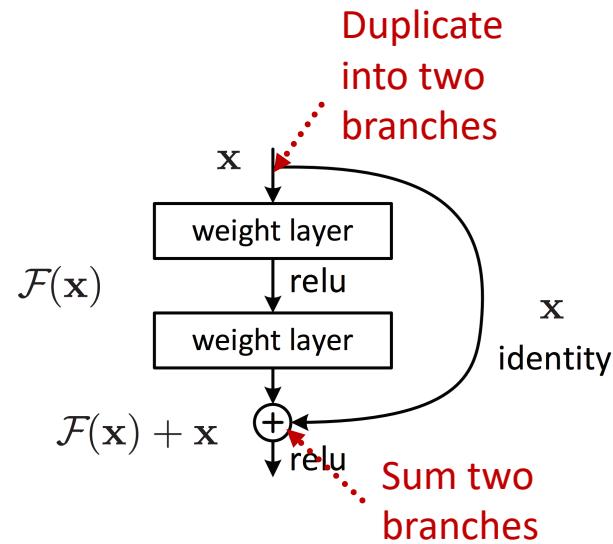
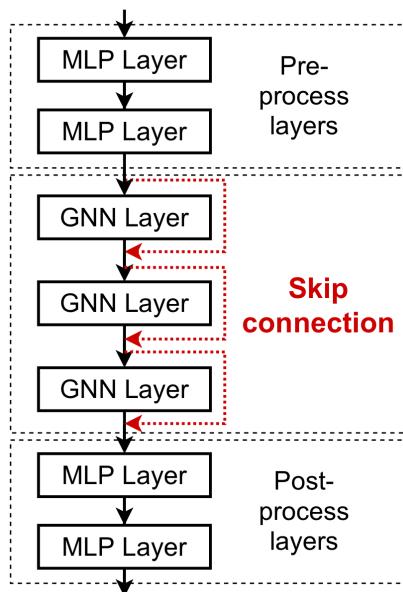
**Pre-processing layers:** Important when encoding node features is necessary.  
E.g., when nodes represent images/text

**Post-processing layers:** Important when reasoning / transformation over node embeddings are needed  
E.g., graph classification, knowledge graphs

In practice, adding these layers works great!

# Design GNN Layer Connectivity

- What if my problem still requires many GNN layers?
- Lesson 2: Add skip connections in GNNs
  - Observation from over-smoothing: Node embeddings in earlier GNN layers can sometimes better differentiate nodes
  - Solution: We can increase the impact of earlier layers on the final node embeddings, **by adding shortcuts in GNN**



Idea of skip connections:

Before adding shortcuts:

$$\mathcal{F}(x)$$

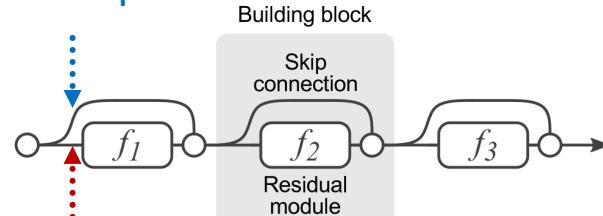
After adding shortcuts:

$$\mathcal{F}(x) + x$$

# Idea of Skip Connections

- Why do skip connections work?
  - Intuition: Skip connections create **a mixture of models**
  - $N$  skip connections  $\rightarrow 2^N$  possible paths
  - Each path could have up to  $N$  modules
  - We automatically get **a mixture of shallow GNNs and deep GNNs**

Path 2: skip this module

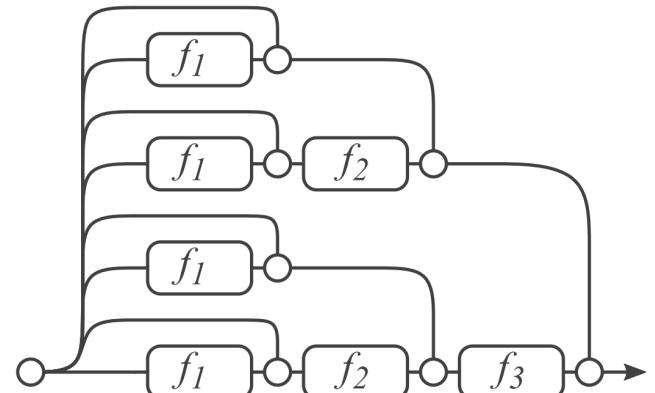


Path 1: include this module

(a) Conventional 3-block residual network

All the possible paths:

$$2 * 2 * 2 = 2^3 = 8$$



(b) Unraveled view of (a)

Veit et al. Residual Networks Behave Like Ensembles of Relatively Shallow Networks, ArXiv 2016

# Example: GCN with Skip Connections

- A standard GCN layer

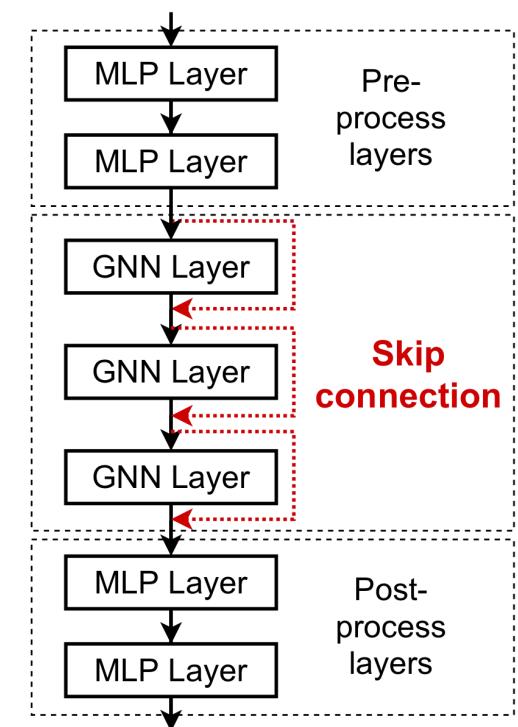
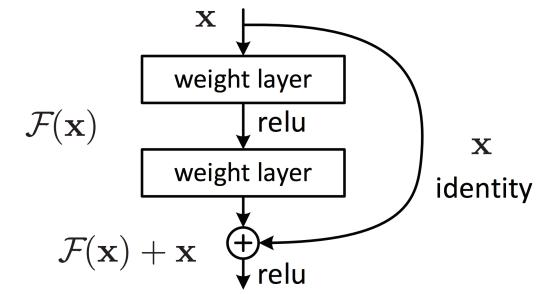
$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \sigma \left( \sum_{u \in N(v)} \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \frac{\mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}}{|N(v)|} \right)$$

This is our  $F(\mathbf{x})$

- A GCN layer with skip connection

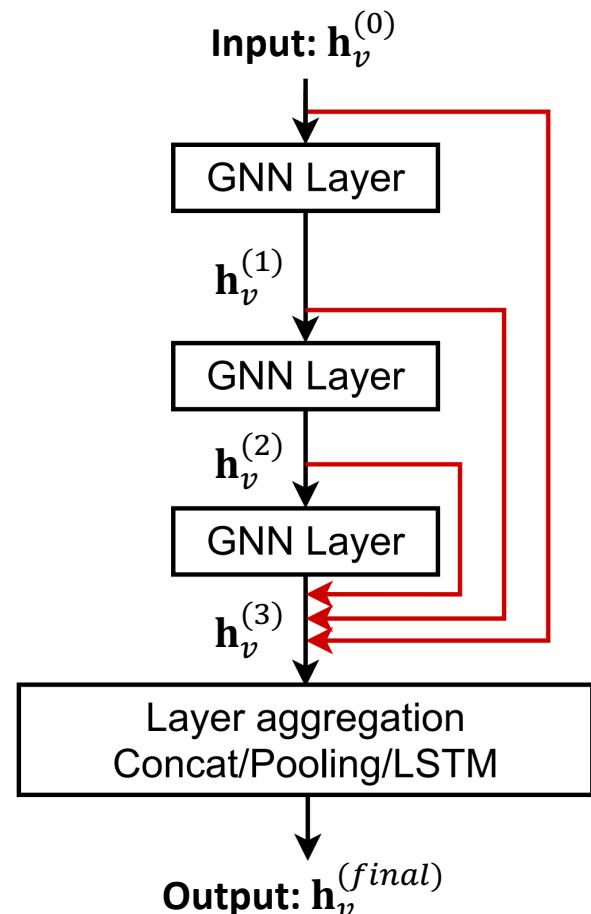
$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(l)} = \sigma \left( \sum_{u \in N(v)} \mathbf{W}^{(l)} \frac{\mathbf{h}_u^{(l-1)}}{|N(v)|} + \mathbf{h}_v^{(l-1)} \right)$$

$F(\mathbf{x})$       +       $\mathbf{x}$



# Other Options of Skip Connections

- **Other options:** Directly skip to the last layer
  - The final layer directly **aggregates from the all the node embeddings** in the previous layers



# **Stanford CS224W:** **Graph Manipulation in GNNs**

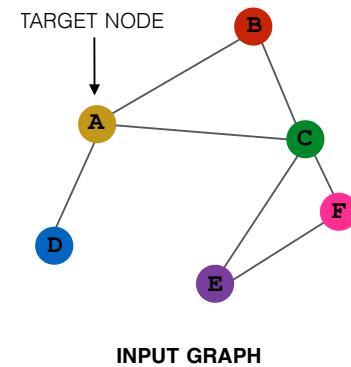
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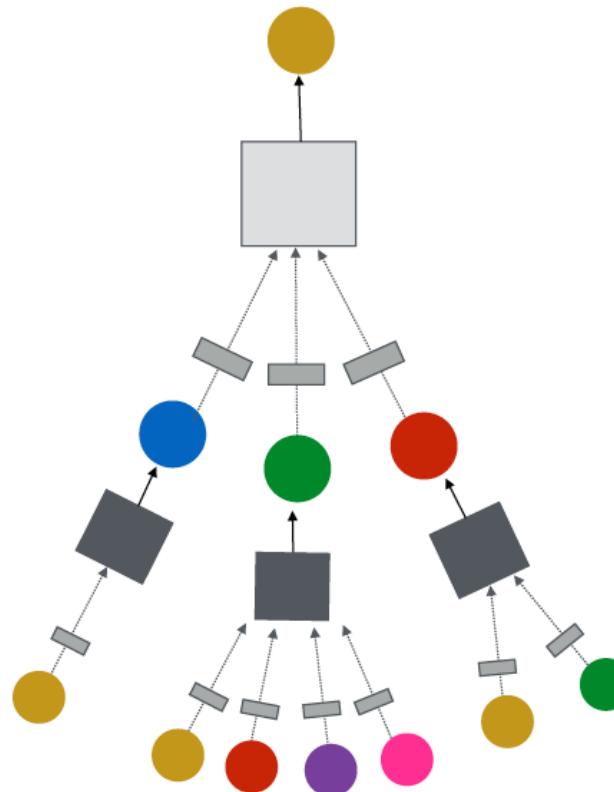


# General GNN Framework



Idea: Raw input graph  $\neq$  computational graph

- Graph feature augmentation
- Graph structure manipulation



(4) Graph manipulation

# Why Manipulate Graphs

Our assumption so far has been

- Raw input graph = computational graph

Reasons for breaking this assumption

- Feature level:
  - The input graph **lacks features** → feature augmentation
- Structure level:
  - The graph is **too sparse** → inefficient message passing
  - The graph is **too dense** → message passing is too costly
  - The graph is **too large** → cannot fit the computational graph into a GPU
- It's just **unlikely that the input graph happens to be the optimal computation graph** for embeddings

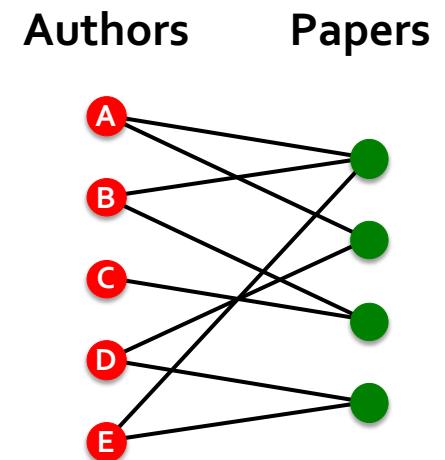
# Graph Manipulation Approaches

- **Graph Feature manipulation**
  - The input graph lacks features → **feature augmentation (will cover in Lecture 7)**
- **Graph Structure manipulation**
  - The graph is **too sparse** → **Add virtual nodes / edges**
  - The graph is **too dense** → **Sample neighbors when doing message passing**
  - The graph is **too large** → **Sample subgraphs to compute embeddings**
    - Will cover later in lecture: Scaling up GNNs

# Add Virtual Nodes / Edges

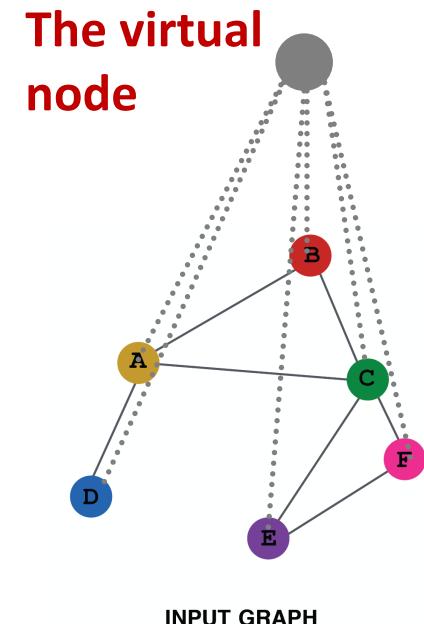
- **Motivation:** Augment sparse graphs
- **(1) Add virtual edges**
  - **Common approach:** Connect 2-hop neighbors via virtual edges
  - **Intuition:** Instead of using adj. matrix  $A$  for GNN computation, use  $A + A^2$

- **Use cases:** Bipartite graphs
  - Author-to-papers (they authored)
  - 2-hop virtual edges make an author-author collaboration graph



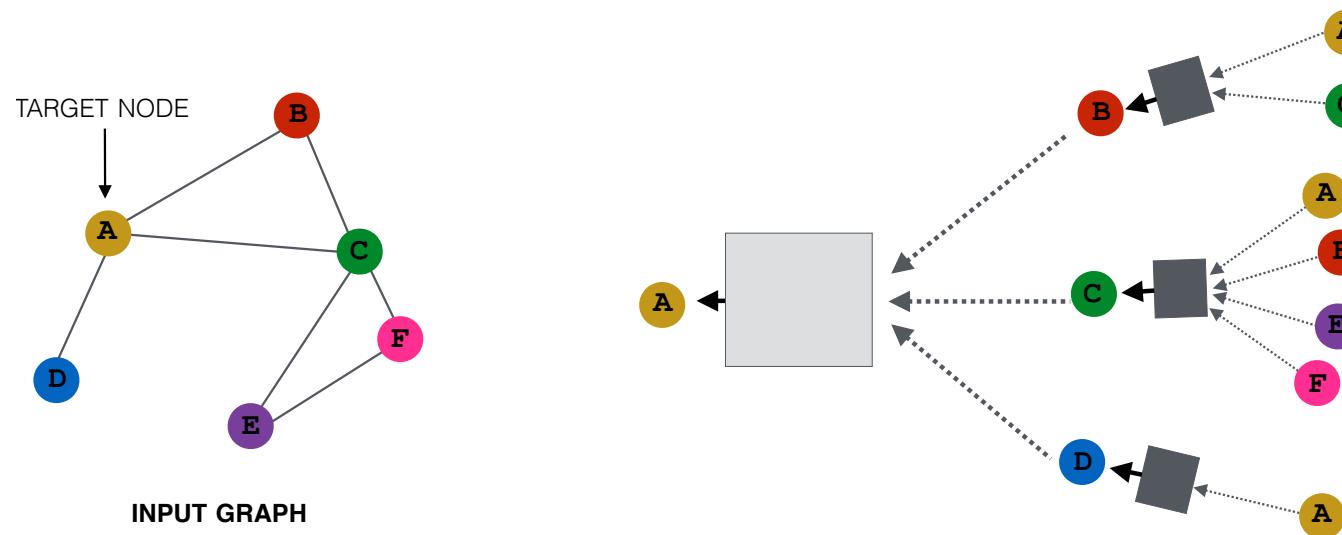
# Add Virtual Nodes / Edges

- **Motivation:** Augment sparse graphs
- **(2) Add virtual nodes**
  - The virtual node will connect to all the nodes in the graph
    - Suppose in a sparse graph, two nodes have shortest path distance of 10
    - After adding the virtual node, **all the nodes will have a distance of 2**
      - Node A – Virtual node – Node B
  - **Benefits:** Greatly **improves message passing in sparse graphs**



# Node Neighborhood Sampling

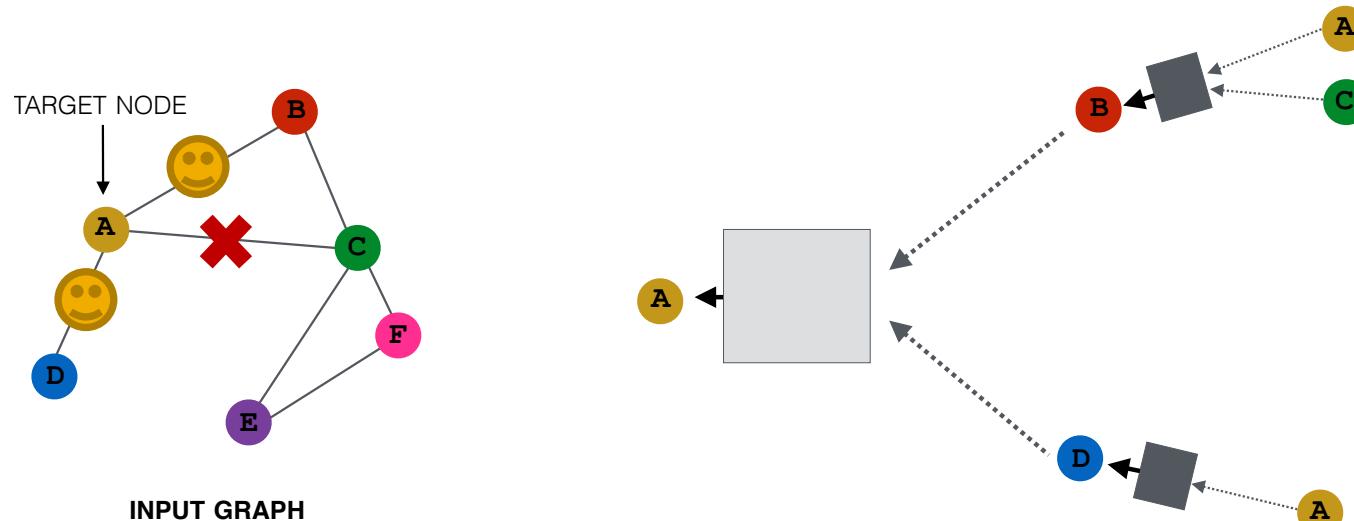
- Our approach so far:
  - All the neighbors are used for message passing
- Problem: Dense/large graphs, high-degree nodes



- New idea: (Randomly) determine a node's neighborhood for message passing

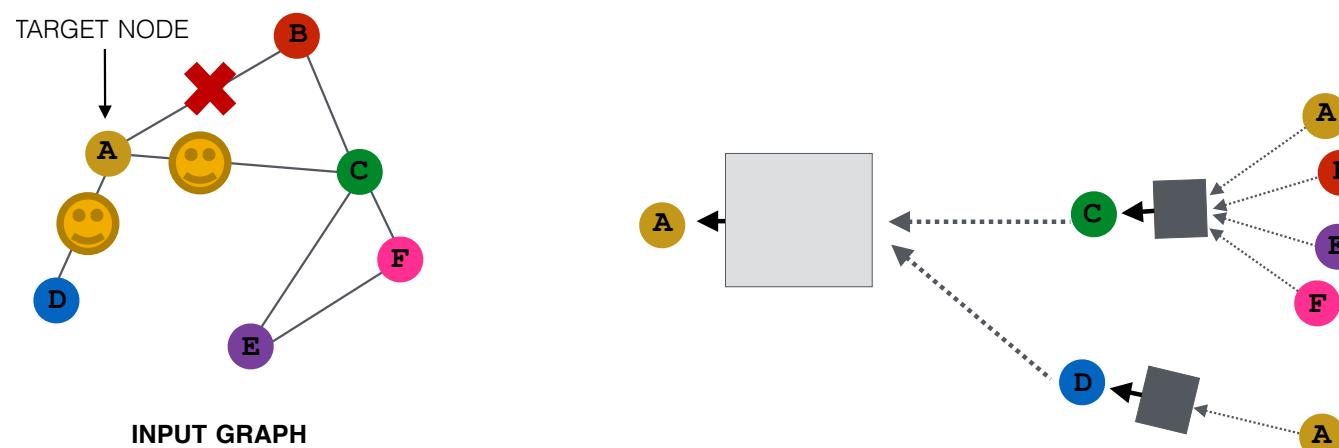
# Neighborhood Sampling Example

- For example, we can randomly choose 2 neighbors to pass messages
  - Only nodes  $B$  and  $D$  will pass message to  $A$



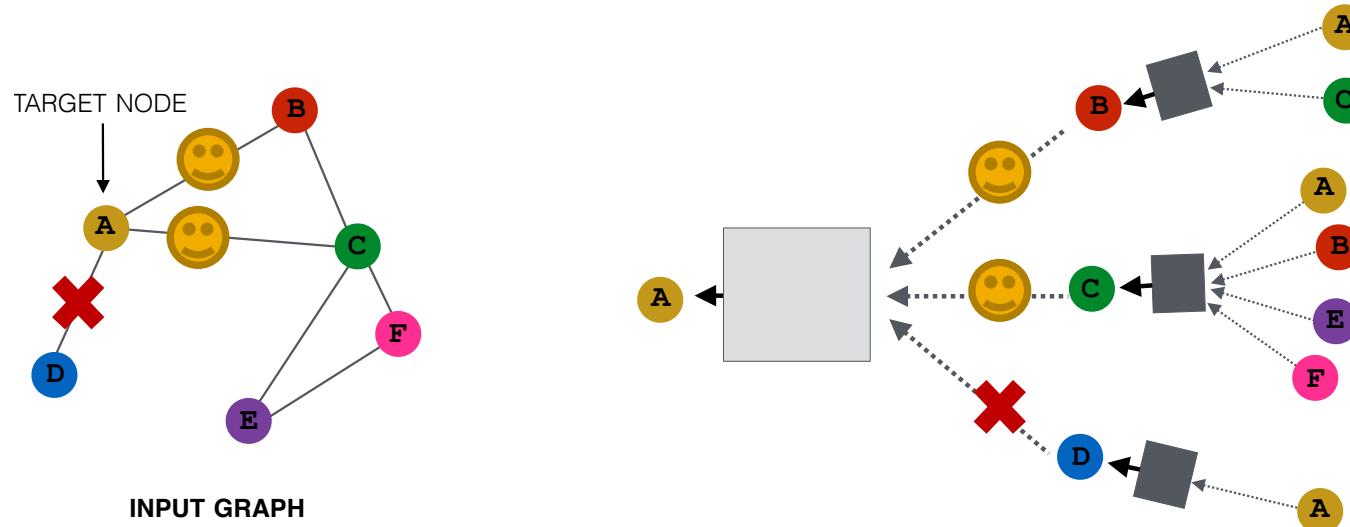
# Neighborhood Sampling Example

- Next time when we compute the embeddings, we can sample different neighbors
  - Only nodes  $C$  and  $D$  will pass message to  $A$



# Neighborhood Sampling Example

- In expectation, we can get embeddings similar to the case where all the neighbors are used
  - Benefits: Greatly reduce computational cost
  - And in practice it works great!



# Summary of the lecture

- **Recap:** A general perspective for GNNs
  - **GNN Layer:**
    - Transformation + Aggregation
    - Classic GNN layers: GCN, GraphSAGE, GAT
  - **Layer connectivity:**
    - Deciding number of layers
    - Skip connections
  - **Graph Manipulation:**
    - Structure manipulation
- **Next:** GNN objectives, GNN in practice