Note to Editor

The manuscript (XXX) titled 'XXXXXXXX' was submitted to AOS a while ago. Back then, the referees pointed out that the main result of the manuscript requires linear growth rate of average degree, which makes it not significant enough in theory. After a very long time of hard work, we have reached a stage where we think we have closed the gap.

We have researched a lot in this boundary of interest. Specifically, in our new revision, we no longer require p_{ij} are in the constant order, and have relaxed the condition to $p_{ij} = O(\varphi_n n^{-1})$, where $\varphi_n \to \infty$ and $\varphi_n \leq n$. It covers the most interesting regime $p_{ij} = O(\log n/n)$, as both of the referee suggested, as a special case. Our models and main theorems in the paper have been modified largely as condition of p_{ij} changed.

We also highlight that, in the revised paper,

- we have provided rigorous proofs of the strong consistency of the proposed method with a better L_∞-norm bound relative to SCORE and its variants, where the almost surely consistency is not provided there (or in other existing literature sources), and the bound in the existing literature has been only in L_F; we believe our results under the current challenging region is very new,
- we have made compelling arguments why the current theorems under the current challenging region are novel,
- we have motivated the relation and difference with SCORE in terms of theory and application,
- we have provided response letters to both referees fully addressing their comments.

Since the manuscript has been very much revised, we contend that it should be regarded as a 'new' paper. Nevertheless, we hope that we could keep the same name with a slight change (Strong Consistency Based on the L_∞ convergence of eigenvectors in DCBM) for the new submission. We believe our current paper matches AOS standard and we hope you may give us the opportunity of a new submission for review.