



CHRISTENSEN
INSTITUTE

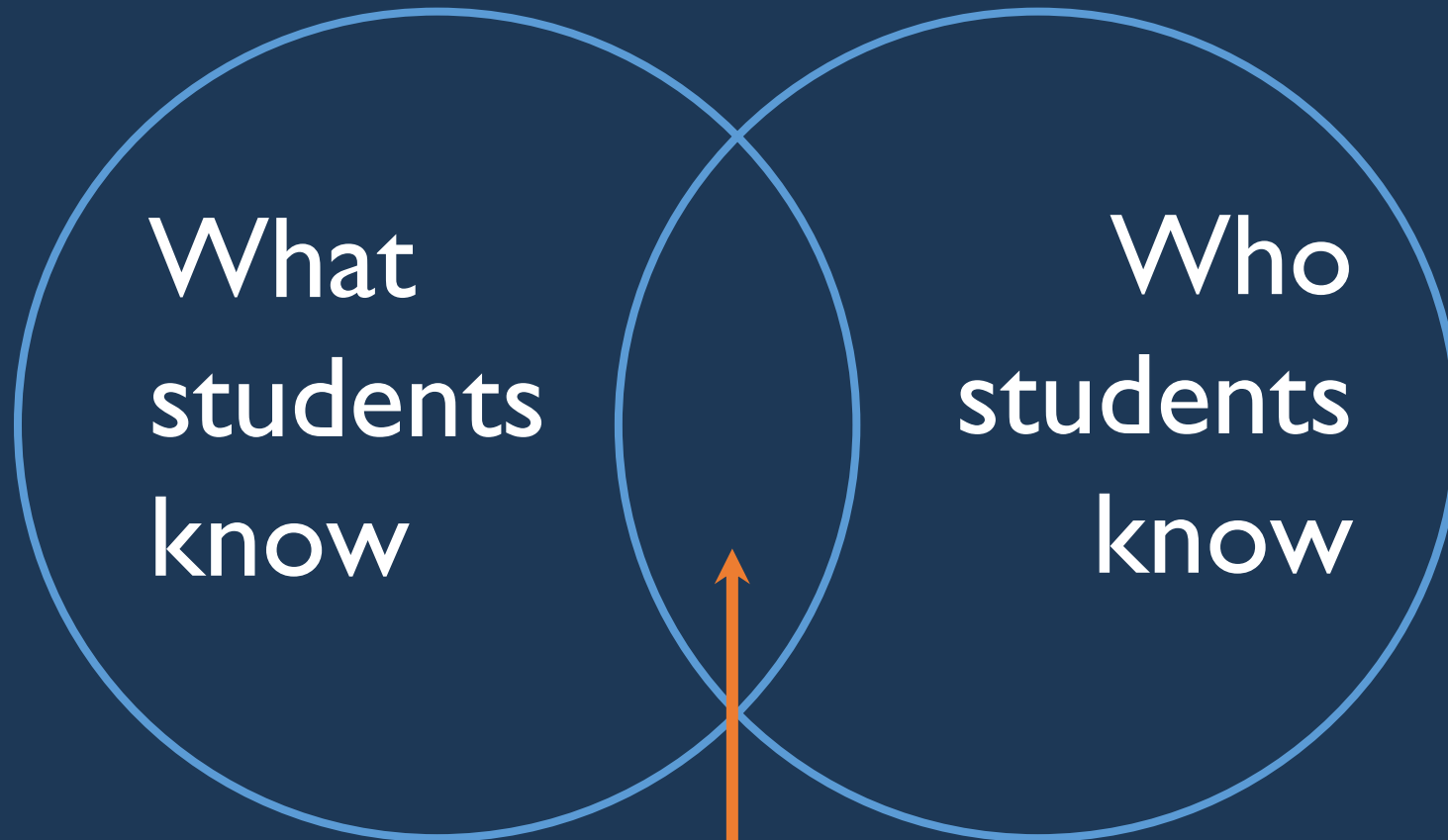
The power of networks & connectivity

Innovations that embed and expand relationships

How did you get here?

Who helped you?





Opportunity



50%

of jobs come through

personal connections



“The clearest message that we get from this 75-year study is this: Good relationships keep us happier and healthier. Period.”

- Robert Waldinger on Harvard's Grant & Glueck study



Benefits of positive, diverse relationships

Early professional exposure shapes career interests

Webs of support decrease disengagement and foster sense of belonging

Peer and faculty relationships are leading indicators of positive college experiences

Broad and diverse industry networks position graduates for labor market flexibility

Long term reservoir of social capital increases career optionality, buffers risk, extends longevity



Not all relationships offer
the *same* value.





Strong Ties

care, resources



Weak Ties

new information, opportunities



Students are agents in their relationships and networks.



Webs of connections >
singular mentors.



Similarity breeds trust.




Without maintenance,
relationships decay.



Technology can disrupt
decay rates and radically
expand weak ties.



A view of Earth from space, showing the blue and white clouds of the planet's surface. The background is a dark, starry space with a colorful nebula or galaxy visible on the right side. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

Innovations strengthening
networks on campus - and
beyond

1

Student-Faculty Relationships

Storytelling & check-ins can make professors more known

On-demand, brief supports can create mentoring moments

2

Peer-to-Peer Relationships

Clear roles and projects foster collaboration and individual progress

Near-peer cohort designs empower students to share their expertise

3

Student-Industry Relationships

Online connections can diversify weak ties otherwise out of reach.

Project-based learning and consultancies foster real-world feedback.



Student - Faculty Relationships

If graduates report having

- (1) a professor who cared about them as a person
- (2) made them excited about learning, and
- (3) encouraged them to pursue their dreams ...

their odds of being engaged at work more than doubled,
as did their odds of thriving in their well-being.

(Gallup Purdue, 2014)



Only 14% of students report
having all 3.

(Gallup Purdue, 2014)



Student-Faculty Networking Strategies

- **Foster familiarity:** Knowing students' names & conducting check-ins at the start of class (Cooper et al., 2017)
- **Make yourself known:** Professor video biography and pre-recorded check-ins (Draus et al., 2014)
- **Discover students' stories:** Life timelines or “This I believe” short essays (<https://thisibelieve.org/>)
- **Offer brief, on-demand advice or connections:** Flash mentoring to expand students' supports or horizons



Peer-to-Peer Relationships

Positive peer dynamics support learning and prosocial behavior, while negative peer dynamics inhibit it (Osher et al, 2018)

The breadth and cohesion of students' peer networks positively affects student outcomes (Berthelon, et al, 2019)

Peers exert a significant influence on students' academic and career decisions, sometimes even more than formal career services. (Strada Education Network and Gallup, September 2017)

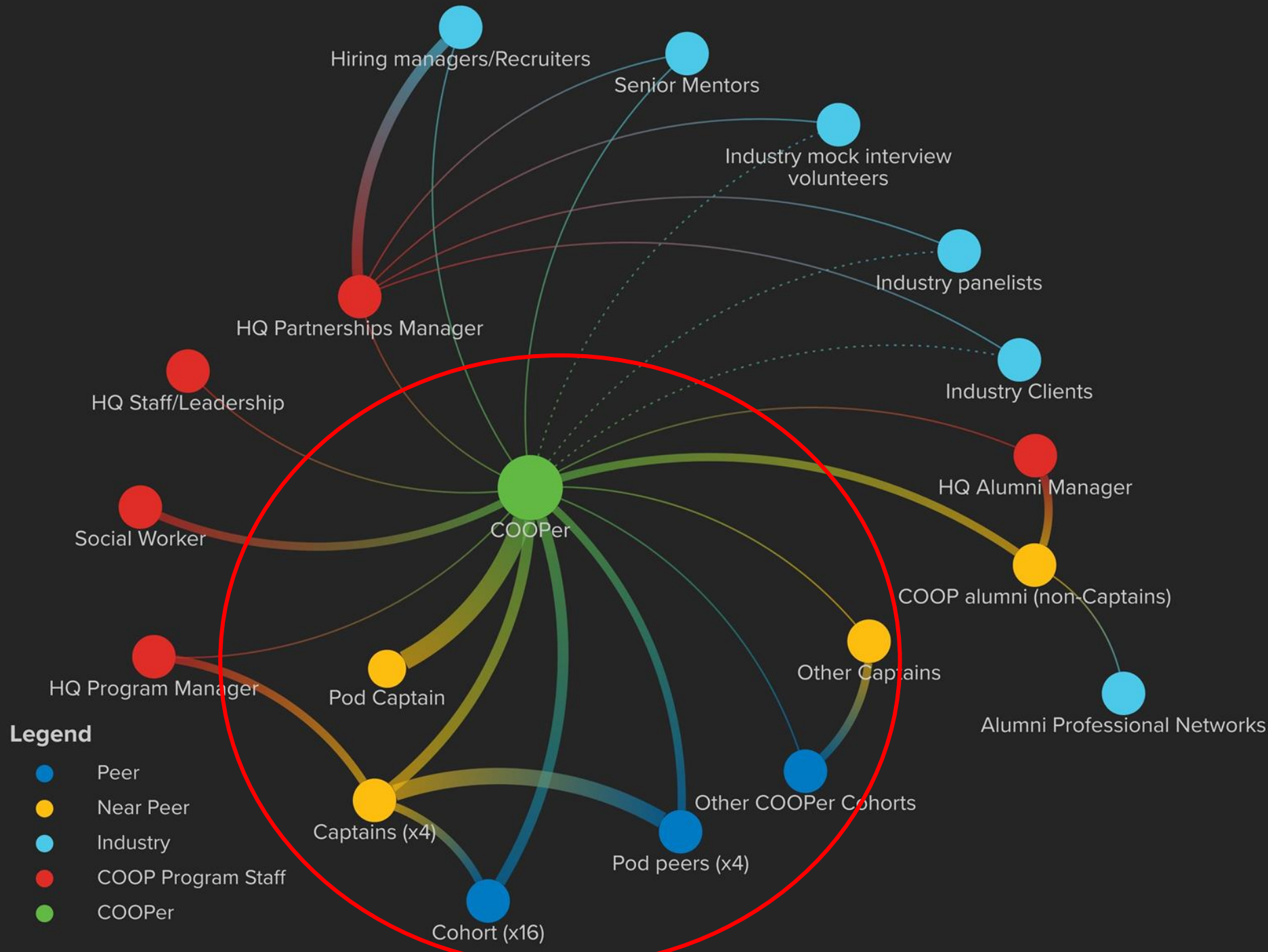


Peer-to-Peer Networking Strategies

- Deliberate cohort design: Launch small cohorts with activities that foster and speed up trust
- Scaffold group assignments: Balance ‘positive interdependence’ and ‘individual accountability’; assign rotating roles to drive engagement
- Surface latent expertise: Encourage student-led Q&A forums rather than just responses through chat functionality
- Leverage that expertise: as soon as a student possesses expertise, offer leadership opportunities



deepening
community
through near-
peer led peer
cohorts as a
strategy to
support scale



Student-Industry Relationships

Networks shape career exposure, which in turn shapes career ambitions. But broad exposure to diverse careers isn't equally distributed. (Bell et al, 2019)

When it comes to job-getting, there's a surprising strength in weak ties. (Granovetter, 1974)

Even brief chats with industry experts can lead to wage premiums. (OECD, 2020)



Only 9% of college graduates reported that their alumni network was helpful or very helpful in the job market.

(Strada Gallup, 2018)

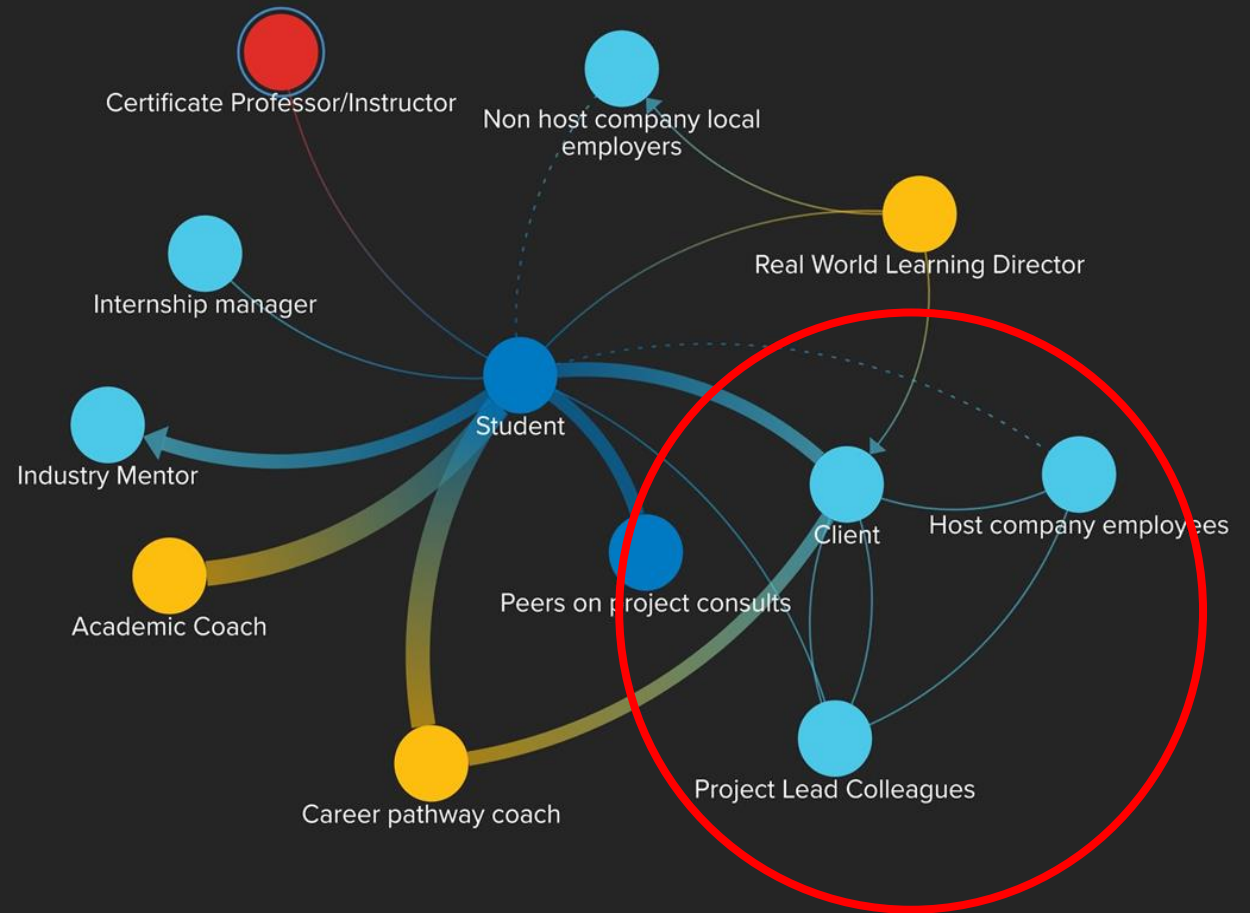


Student-Industry Networking Strategies

- Take stock: Find out who your students already know working in relevant industries
- Scaffold interactions with outside industry experts (a wave, a handshake, a huddle)
- Embed outside experts into assessment processes to provide authentic, real-world feedback
- Assign student-led interviews to get to know or deepen connections with individuals working in industry
- Empower students to reflect on and document (on an ongoing basis) *who knows what they know*



expanding industry connections through brief project consults that emphasize weekly project check-ins and demonstrations of learning



Legend

- Student
- DaVinci Staff
- Industry
- Postsecondary Partner

It's not the technology, it's
the model you wrap around
it.



'Edtech that Connects' strategies

- *Use technology for on-demand flash mentoring* even in small ways
- *Foster a culture of emotional and instrumental support over chat* by assigning students early on to ask and answer questions and share what they can offer to their peers
- *Leverage technology to forge connections otherwise out of reach* due to time, cost, and geography
- *Prime guest speakers to build relationships* by naming the importance of social capital and asking if students can get back in touch



Measurement and equity go hand in hand.

QUANTITY OF
RELATIONSHIPS



QUALITY OF
RELATIONSHIPS



STRUCTURE OF
NETWORKS



ABILITY TO MOBILIZE
RELATIONSHIPS



Relationship data can
surface latent resources &
drive decisions.





Keep in touch!

jfreeland@christenseninstitute.org

5 Steps for Building & Strengthening Students' Networks

www.whoyouknow.org/playbook

Market Map of EdTech that Connects

www.whoyouknow.org