



Course Overview

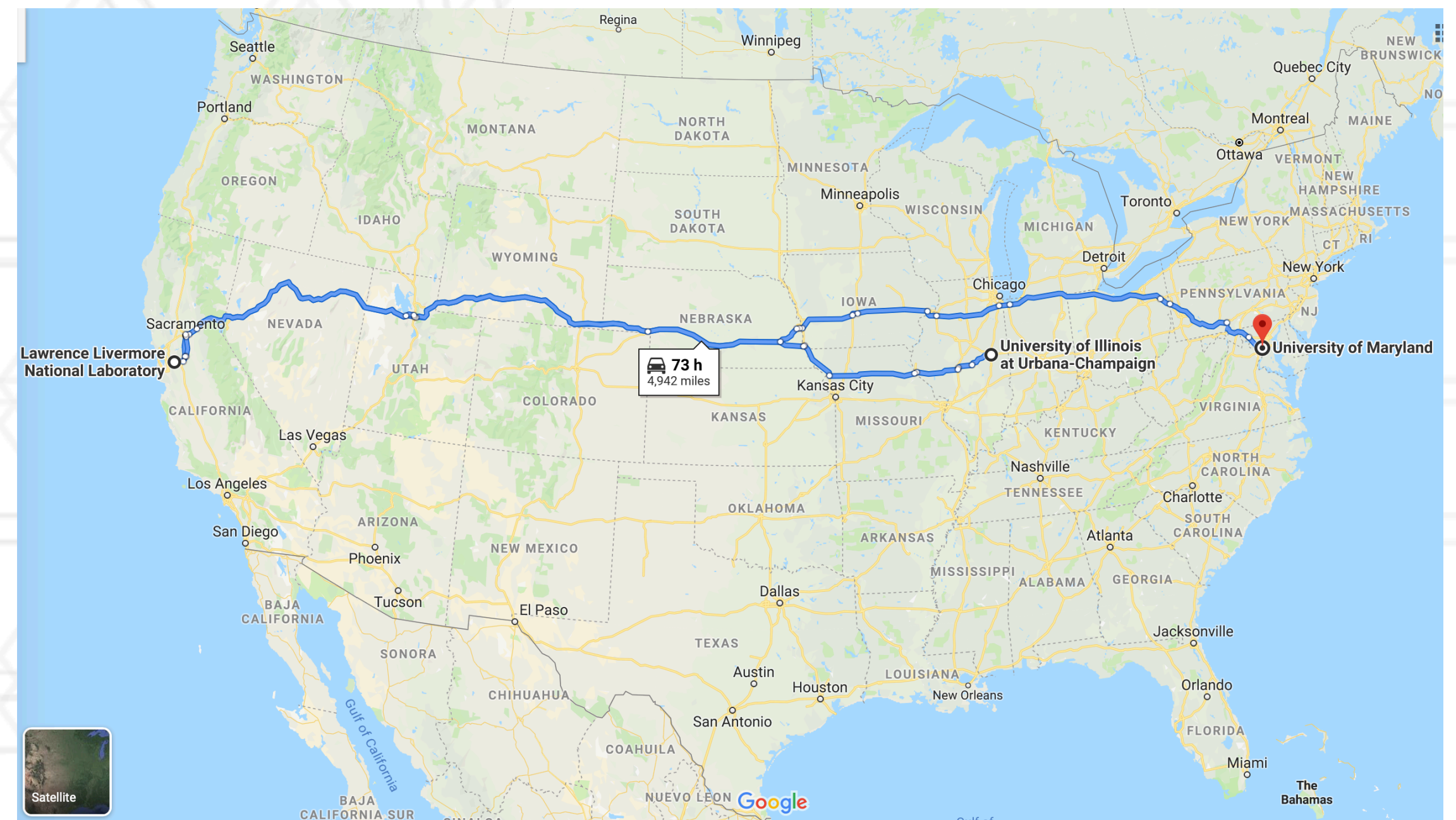
Abhinav Bhatele, Department of Computer Science



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND

About the instructor — Dr. Bhatele

- Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- Spent eight years at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
- Started at the University of Maryland in 2019
- Research areas:
 - High performance computing
 - Distributed AI



Introductions

- Name
- Junior/Senior/Graduate student
- Something interesting/unique about yourself
- *(optional) Why this course?*

This course is

- An introduction to parallel computing
- 416: Upper Level CS Coursework / General Track / Area I: Systems
- 616: Qualifying course for MS/PhD: Computer Systems
- Work expected:
 - Five to six programming assignments
 - Three to four quizzes (no advance notice)
 - Midterm exam: in class on October 30
 - Final exam: December 15 10:30 am-12:30 pm

Course topics

- Introduction to parallel computing (1 week)
- Shared-memory parallel programming (1 week)
- Parallel algorithm design (2 weeks)
- Distributed memory parallel programming (3 weeks)
- Performance analysis and tools (2 weeks)
- GPU programming (1 week)
- Parallel architectures and networks (1 week)
- Parallel simulation codes (2 weeks)

Tools we will use for the class

- Syllabus, lecture slides, programming assignment descriptions on course website:
 - <https://www.cs.umd.edu/class/fall2025/cmsc416>
- Programming assignment submissions on gradescope
- Quizzes on ELMS
- Discussions: Piazza
 - <https://piazza.com/umd/fall2025/cmsc416cmsc616>
- If you want to contact the course staff outside of piazza, send an email to:
cmsc416@cs.umd.edu

Zaratan accounts

- Zaratan is the UMD DIT cluster we'll use for the programming assignments
- You should receive an email when your account is ready for use
- Helpful resources:
 - <https://hpcc.umd.edu/hpcc/help/usage.html>
 - <https://missing.csail.mit.edu>
 - <https://www.cs.umd.edu/~mmarsh/books/cmdline/cmdline.html>
 - <https://www.cs.umd.edu/~mmarsh/books/tools/tools.html>

Programming assignments

- You can write and debug most of your assignment locally:
 - Use a virtual linux box
 - Docker containers
 - MacOS: use macports or homebrew
- On zaratan:
 - Use command line editors such as vim

Excused absence

Any student who needs to be excused for an absence from a single lecture, due to a medically necessitated absence shall make a reasonable attempt to inform the instructor of his/her illness prior to the class. Upon returning to the class, present the instructor with a self-signed note attesting to the date of their illness. Each note must contain an acknowledgment by the student that the information provided is true and correct. Providing false information to University officials is prohibited under Part 9(i) of the Code of Student Conduct (V-I.00(B) University of Maryland Code of Student Conduct) and may result in disciplinary action.

Self-documentation may not be used for Major Scheduled Grading Events (midterm and final exams) and it may only be used for one class meeting during the semester. Any student who needs to be excused for a prolonged absence (two or more consecutive class meetings), or for a Major Scheduled Grading Event, must provide written documentation of the illness from the Health Center or from an outside health care provider. This documentation must verify dates of treatment and indicate the timeframe that the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities. In addition, it must contain the name and phone number of the medical service provider to be used if verification is needed. No diagnostic information will ever be requested.

Use of LLMs

AI assistance (ChatGPT, Copilot, DALL-E, etc.) is not permitted for coding, writing, editing, or any other part of the quizzes and programming assignments. Even though we expect you will use these tools in the future, this approach will help you build a solid understanding of the subject matter, which will benefit your future career.

You can use AI tools such as ChatGPT as you would use Google for research. However, you cannot generate your solutions using ChatGPT. You must demonstrate independent thought and effort. If you use any AI tools for anything class related, you must mention that in your answer/report. Please note that LLMs provide unreliable information, regardless of how convincingly they do so. If you are going to use an LLM as a research tool in your submission, you must ensure that the information is correct and addresses the actual question asked.

Academic dishonesty

- In the last few years, we have discovered that 10-15% of students have been involved in academic dishonesty
- We use software to detect plagiarism in programming assignments
- If we suspect something, we must report it to the Office of Student Conduct (OSC)

What is parallel computing?

- Serial or sequential computing: doing a task in sequence on a single processor
- Parallel computing: breaking up a task into sub-tasks and doing them in parallel (concurrently) on a set of processors (often connected by a network)
- Some tasks do not need any communication: embarrassingly parallel

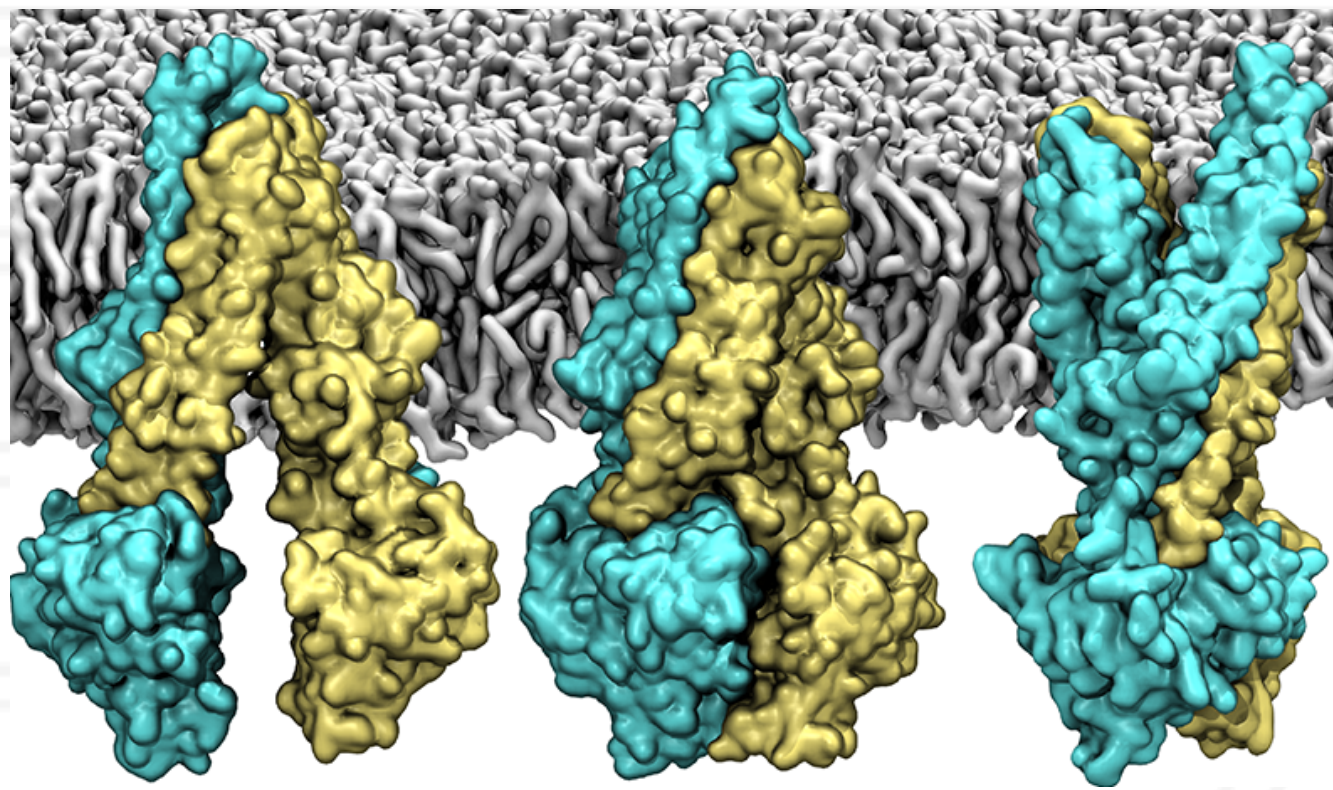
What is parallel computing?

- Does it include:
 - Grid computing: processors are dispersed geographically
 - Distributed computing: processors connected by a network
 - Cloud computing: on-demand availability, typically pay-as-you-go model
- Does it include:
 - Superscalar processors
 - Vector processors
 - Accelerators (GPUs, FPGAs)

The need for parallel computing or HPC

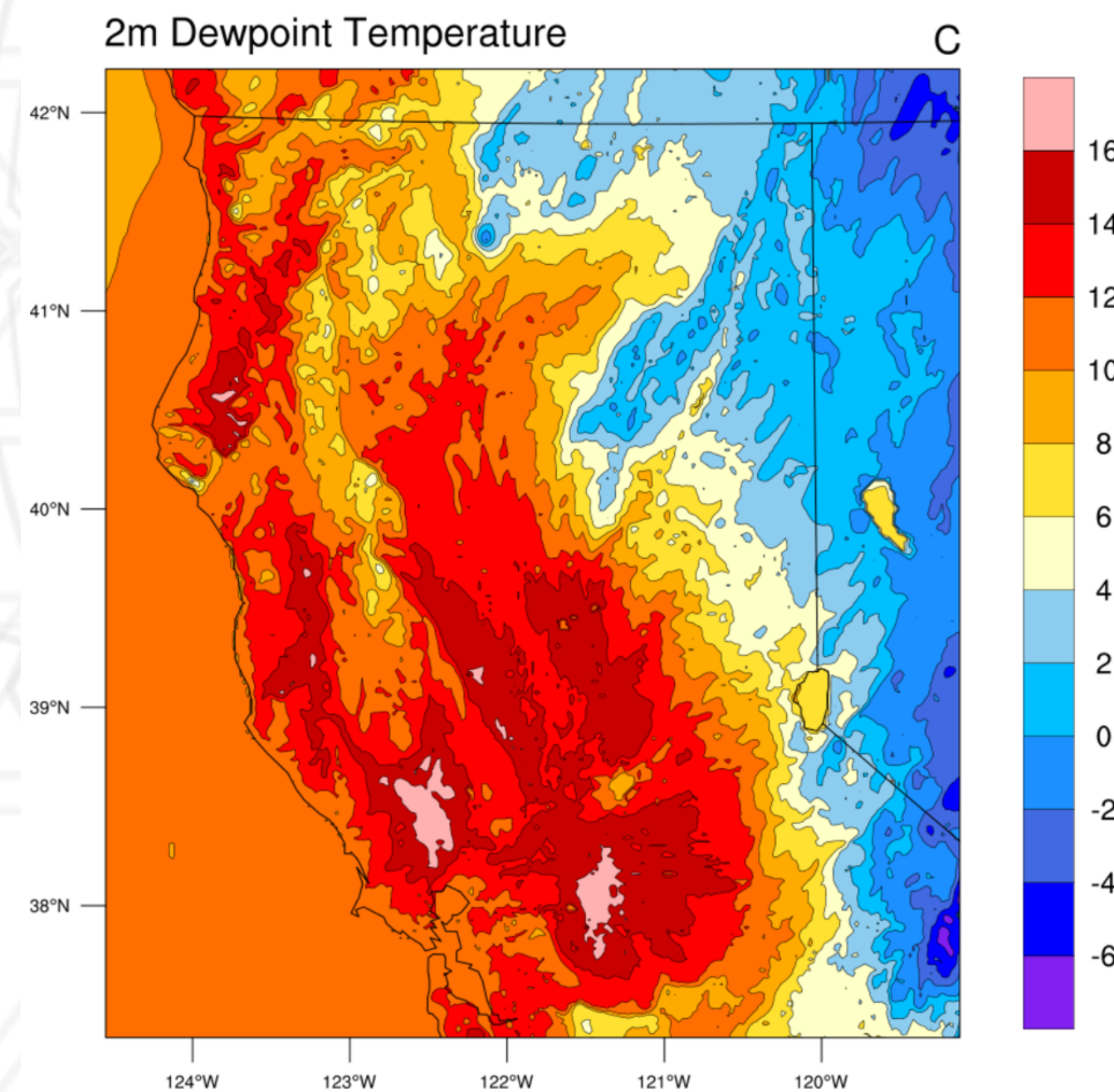
HPC stands for High Performance Computing

Drug discovery



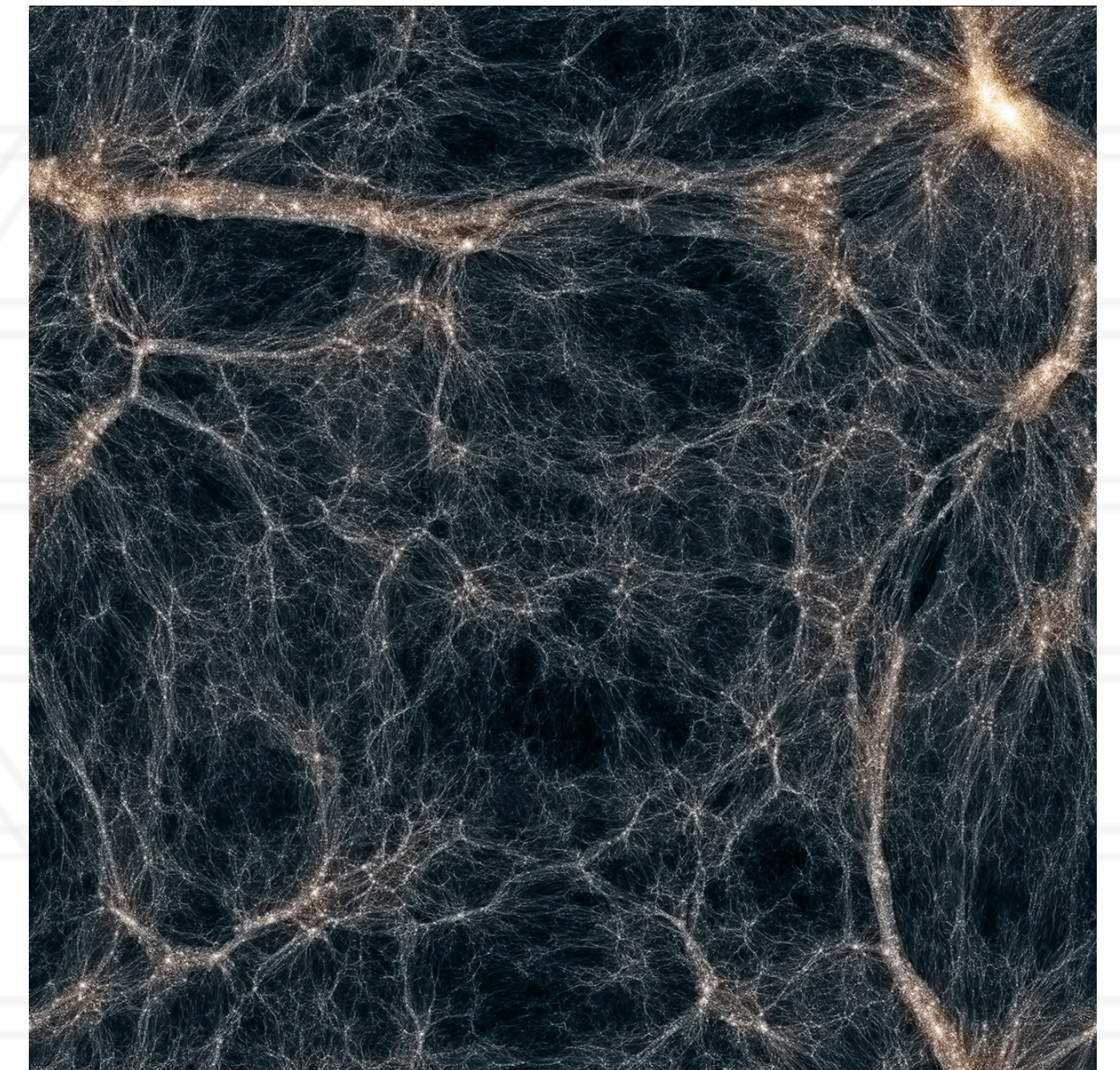
<https://www.nature.com/articles/nature21414>

Weather forecasting



<https://www.ncl.ucar.edu/Applications/wrf.shtml>

Study of the universe



<https://www.nasa.gov/SC14/demos/demo27.html>

Why do we need parallelism?

- Make some science simulations feasible in the lifetime of humans
- Typical constraints are speed or memory requirements
 - Either it would take too long to do the simulations
 - Or the simulation data would not fit in the memory of a single processor
 - Made possible by using more than one core/processor
- Provide answers in realtime or near realtime

Large supercomputers

- Top500 list: <https://www.top500.org/lists/top500/2025/06>

Rank	System	Cores	Rmax (PFlop/s)	Rpeak (PFlop/s)	Power (kW)
1	El Capitan - HPE Cray EX255a, AMD 4th Gen EPYC 24C 1.8GHz, AMD Instinct MI300A, Slingshot-11, TOSS, HPE DOE/NNSA/LLNL United States	11,039,616	1,742.00	2,746.38	29,581
2	Frontier - HPE Cray EX235a, AMD Optimized 3rd Generation EPYC 64C 2GHz, AMD Instinct MI250X, Slingshot-11, HPE Cray OS, HPE DOE/SC/Oak Ridge National Laboratory United States	9,066,176	1,353.00	2,055.72	24,607
3	Aurora - HPE Cray EX - Intel Exascale Compute Blade, Xeon CPU Max 9470 52C 2.4GHz, Intel Data Center GPU Max, Slingshot-11, Intel DOE/SC/Argonne National Laboratory United States	9,264,128	1,012.00	1,980.01	38,698
4	JUPITER Booster - BullSequana XH3000, GH Superchip 72C 3GHz, NVIDIA GH200 Superchip, Quad-Rail NVIDIA InfiniBand NDR200, RedHat Enterprise Linux, EVIDEN EuroHPC/FZJ Germany	4,801,344	793.40	930.00	13,088
5	Eagle - Microsoft NDv5, Xeon Platinum 8480C 48C 2GHz, NVIDIA H100, NVIDIA Infiniband NDR, Microsoft Azure Microsoft Azure United States	2,073,600	561.20	846.84	

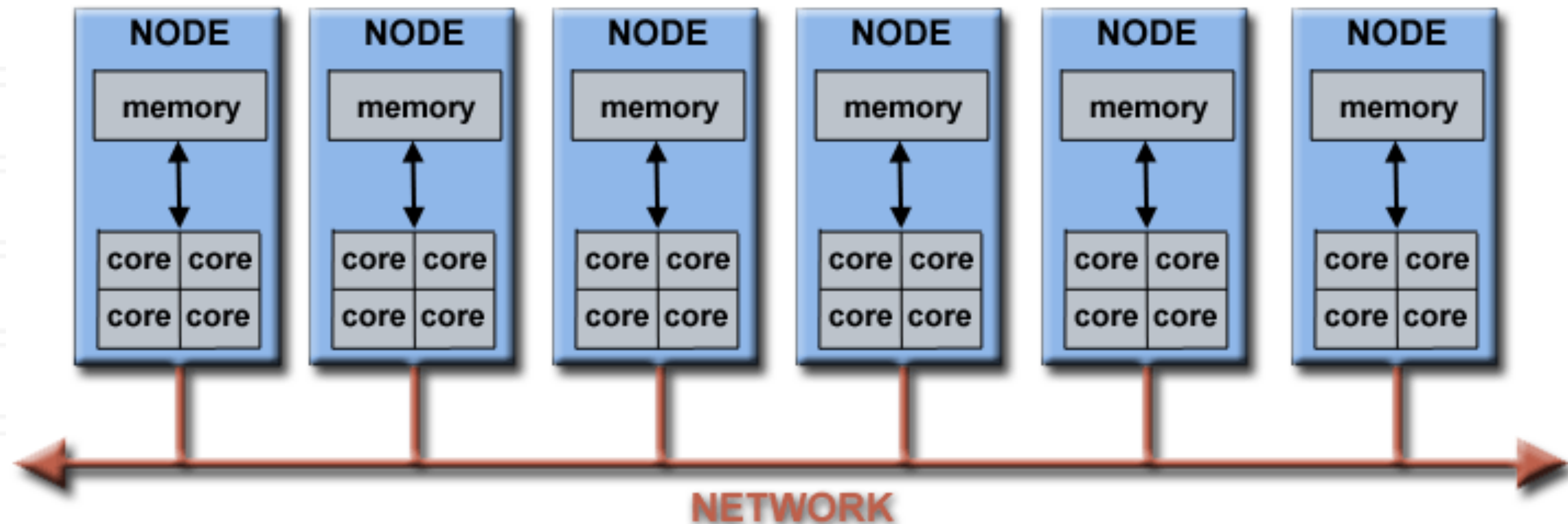


El Capitan @ LLNL

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Capitan_\(supercomputer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Capitan_(supercomputer))

Parallel architecture

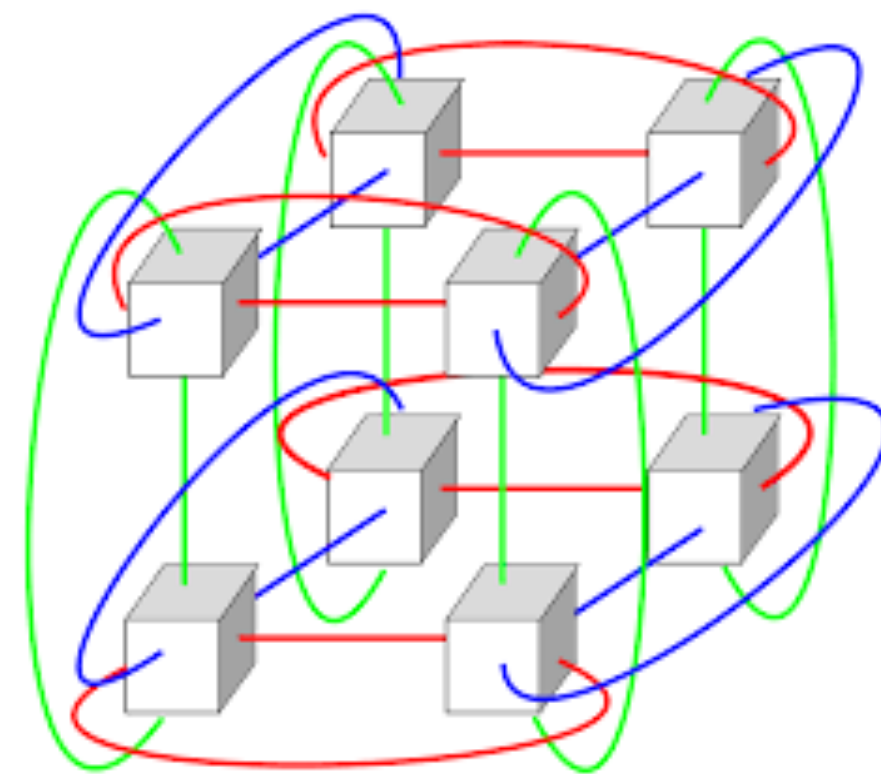
- A set of nodes or processing elements connected by a network.



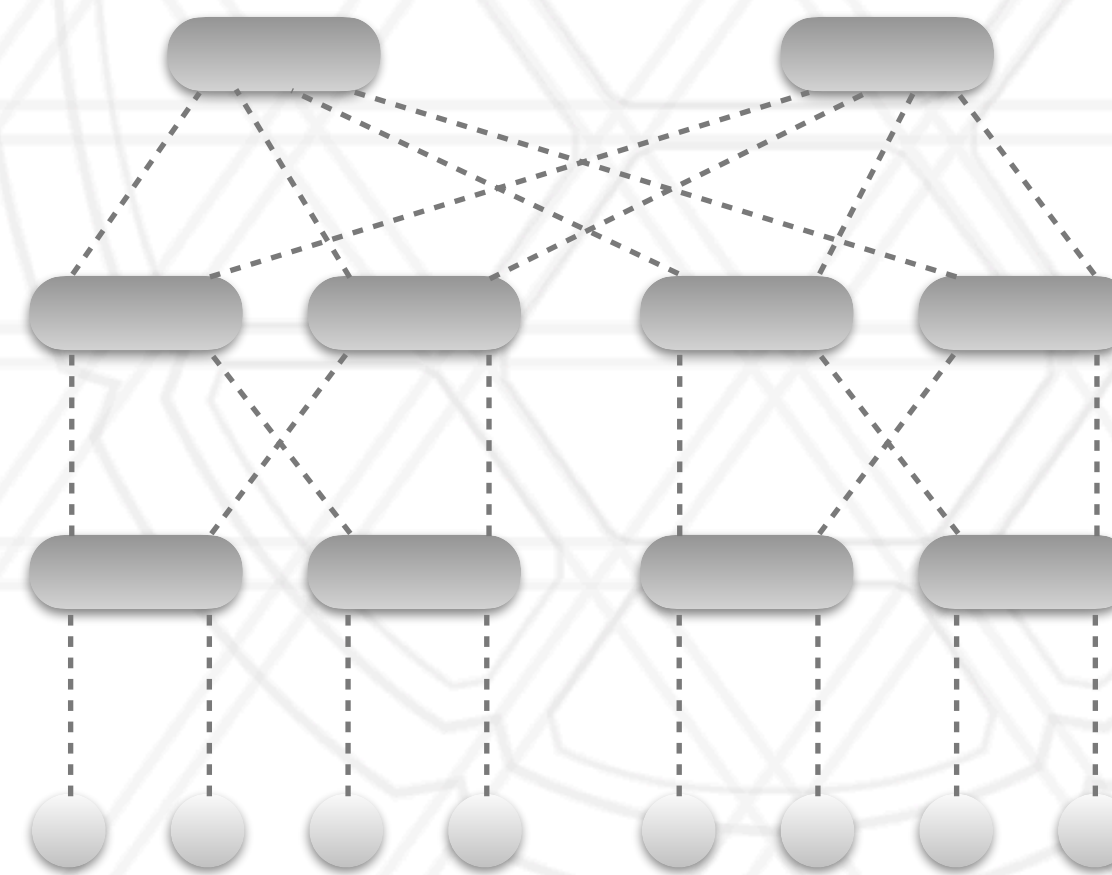
https://computing.llnl.gov/tutorials/parallel_comp

Interconnection networks

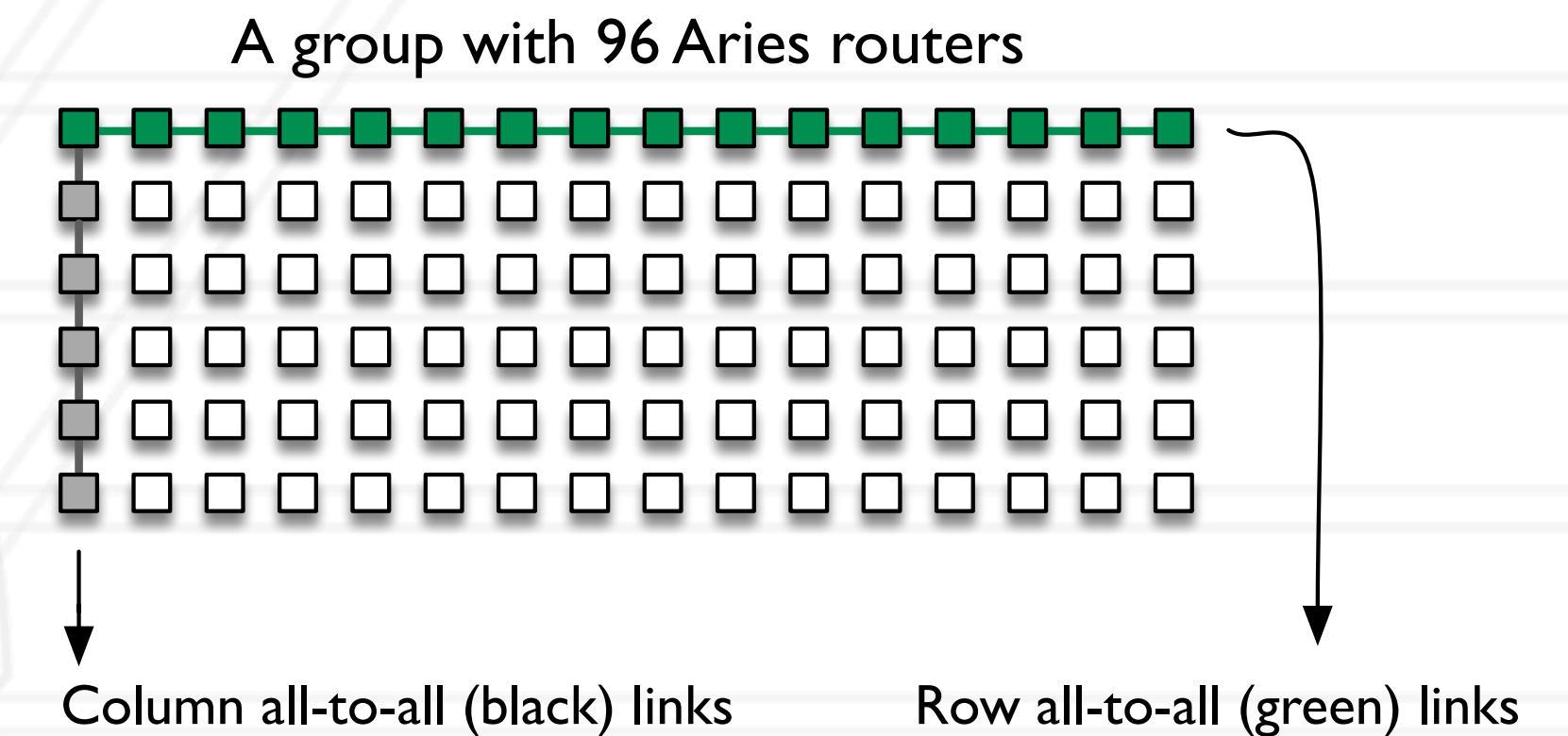
- Different topologies for connecting nodes together
- Used in the past: torus, hypercube
- More popular currently: fat-tree, dragonfly



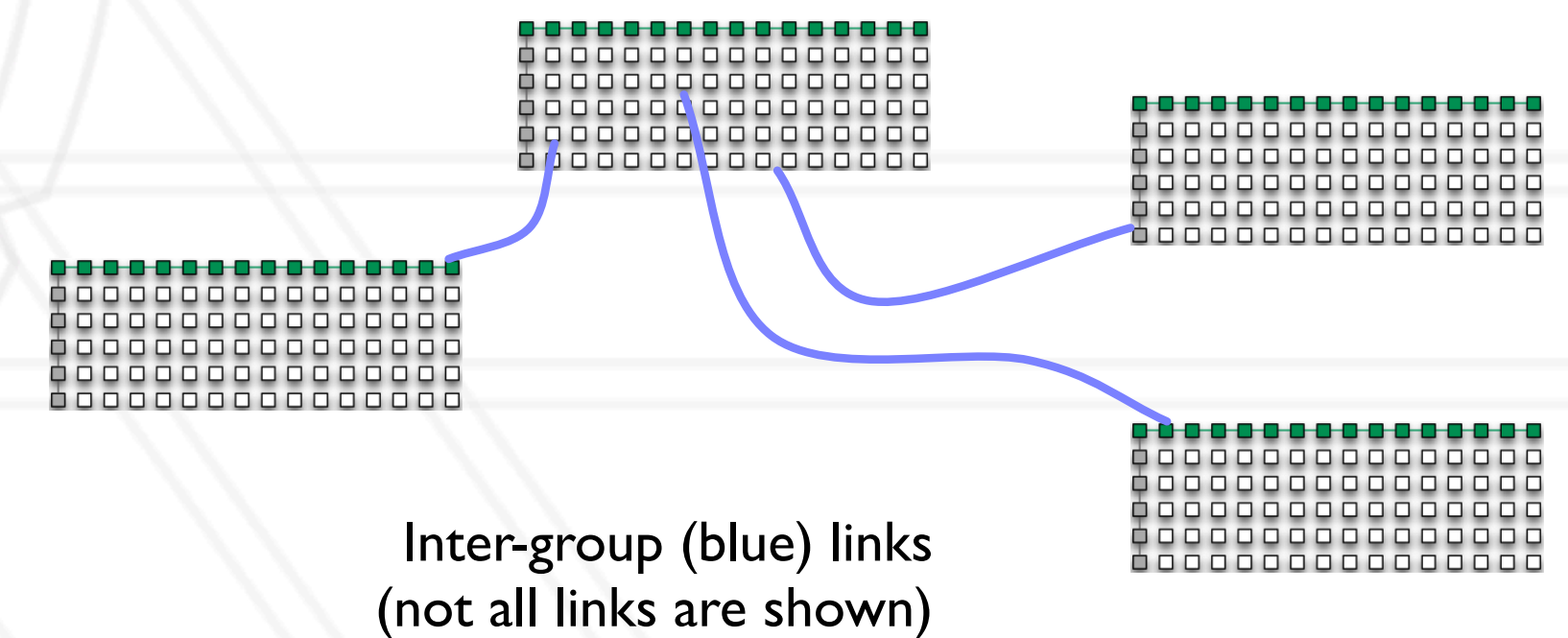
Torus



Fat-tree



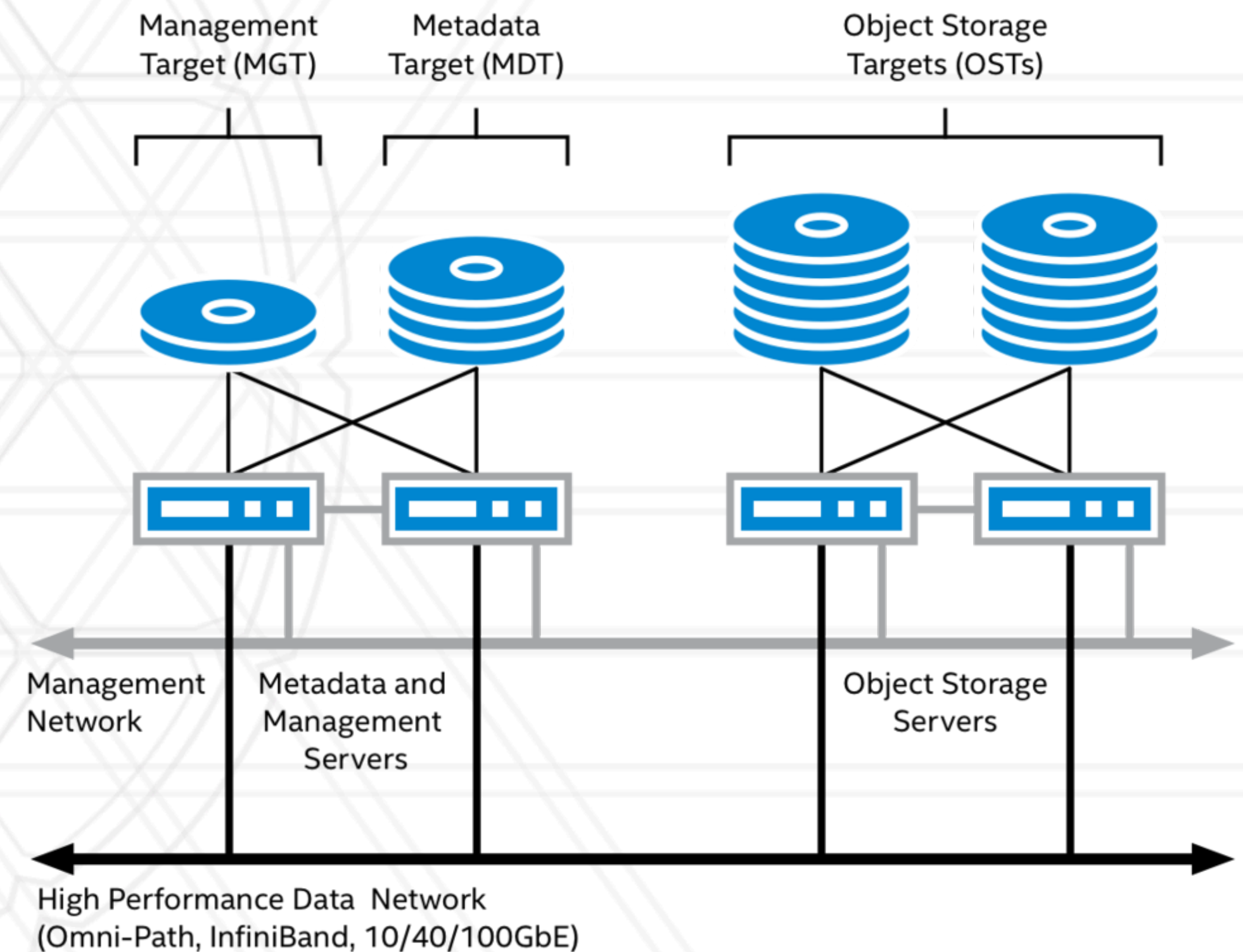
Two-level dragonfly with multiple groups



Dragonfly

I/O sub-system / Parallel file system

- Home directories and scratch space on clusters are typically on a parallel file system
- Compute nodes do not have local disks
- Parallel filesystem is mounted on all login and compute nodes



http://wiki.lustre.org/Introduction_to_Lustre

System software: models and runtimes

- Parallel programming model

- Parallelism is achieved through language constructs or by making calls to a library and the execution model depends on the model used.

User code

- Parallel runtime [system]:

- Implements the parallel execution model

Parallel runtime

- Shared memory/address-space

- Pthreads, OpenMP, Chapel

Communication library

- Distributed memory

- MPI, Charm

Operating system



Terminology and Definitions

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Announcements

- Zaratan accounts have been created for everyone
- Quiz 0 has been posted on ELMS
- Assignment 0.1 will be posted next week
- Midterm has been scheduled for October 30
- No class on Tuesday (September 9)
- Undergrads interested in research — look out for a Piazza post

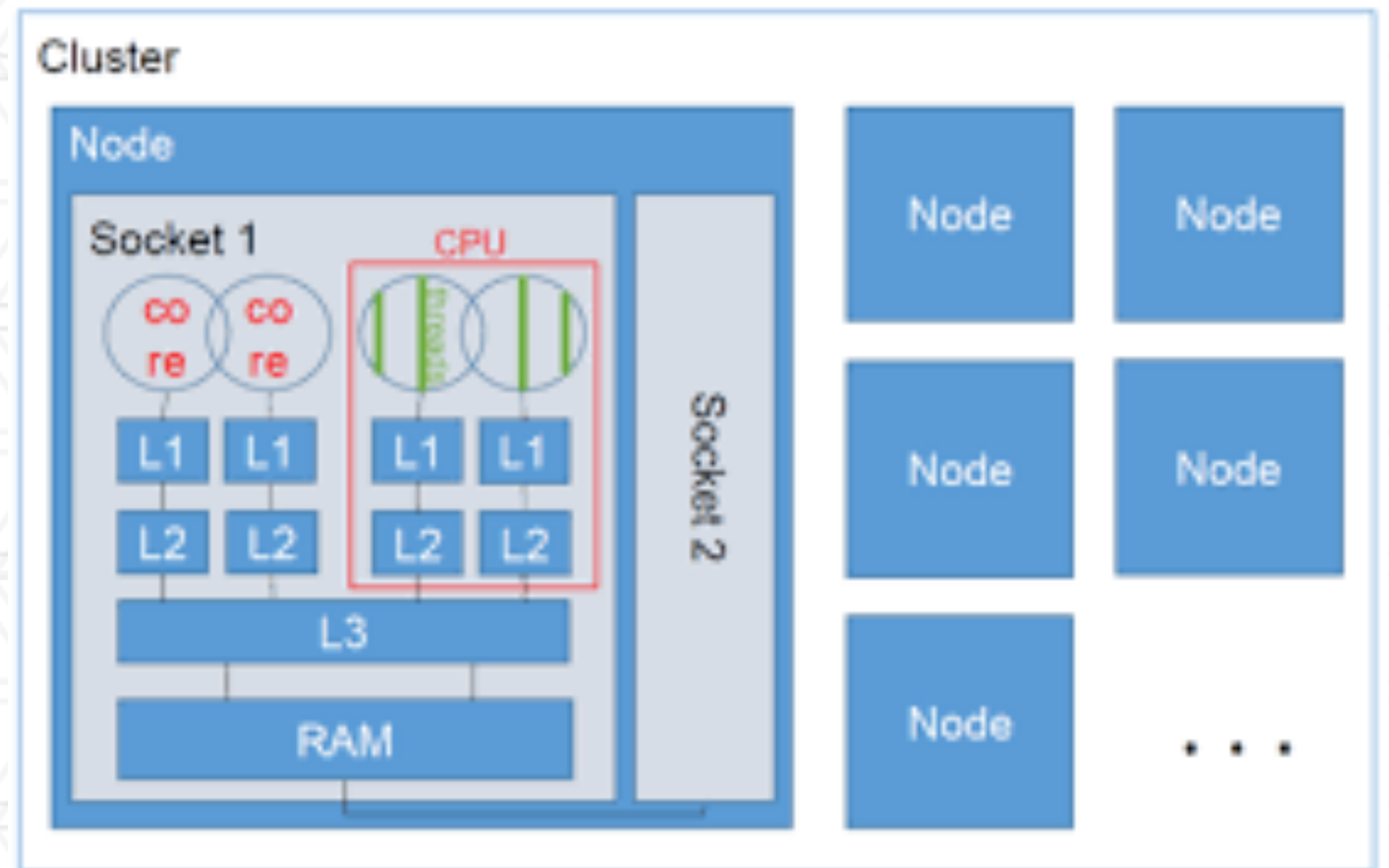
Getting started with zaratan

- Over 360 nodes with AMD Milan processors (128 cores/node, 512 GB memory/node)
- 20 nodes with four NVIDIA A100 GPUs (40 GB per GPU)

```
ssh username@login.zaratan.umd.edu
```


Cores, sockets, nodes

- Core: a single execution unit that has a private L1 cache and can execute instructions independently
- Processor: several cores on a single Integrated Circuit (IC) or chip are called a multi-core processor
- Socket: physical connector into which an IC/chip or processor is inserted.
- Node: a packaging of sockets — motherboard or printed circuit board (PCB) that has multiple sockets

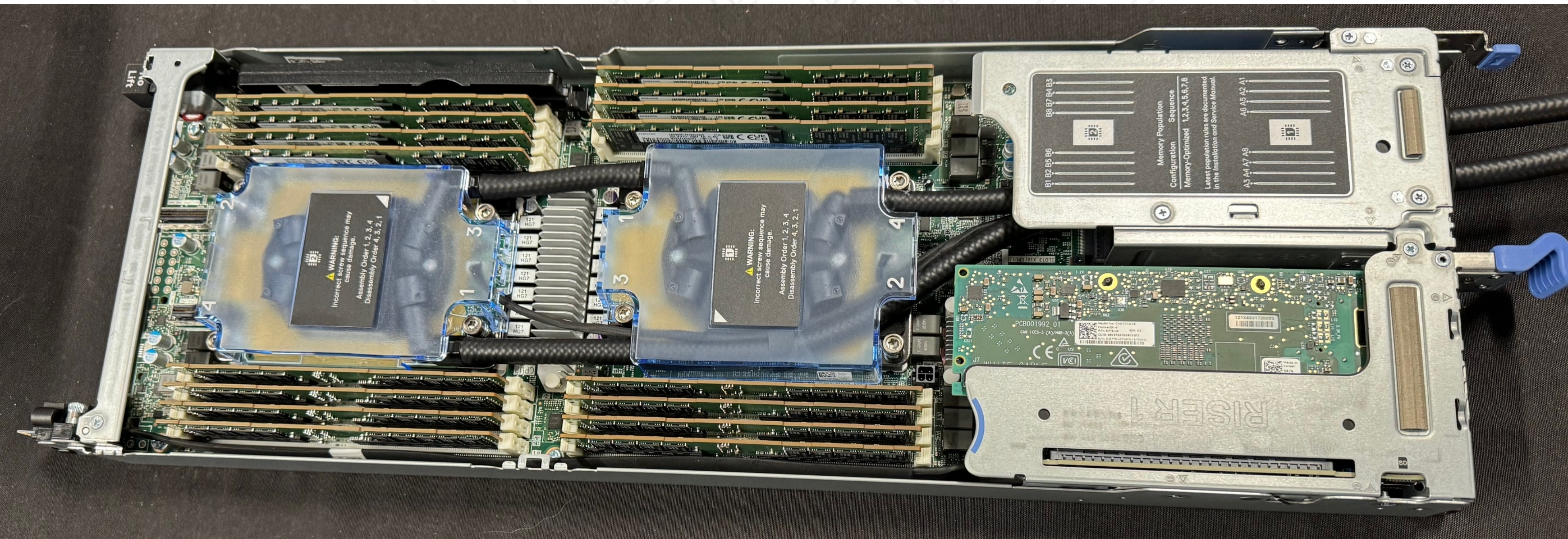


<https://hpc-wiki.info/hpc/HPC-Dictionary>

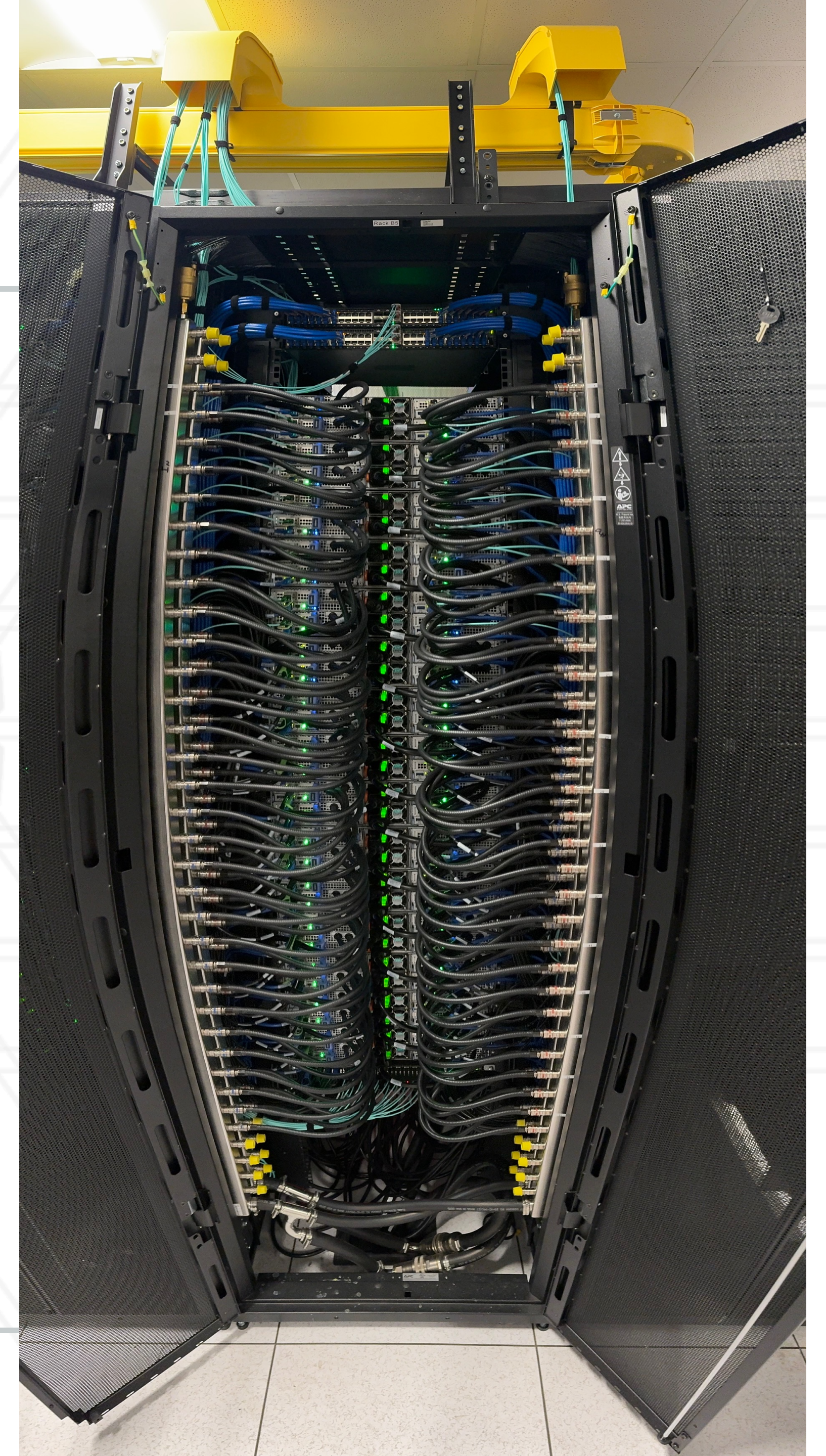
Rackmount servers



Zaratan CPU compute node



Zaratan racks / cabinets



Job scheduling

- HPC systems use job or batch scheduling
- Each user submits their parallel programs for execution to a “job” scheduler
- The scheduler decides:
 - what job to schedule next (based on an algorithm: FCFS, priority-based,)
 - what resources (compute nodes) to allocate to the ready job

- Compute nodes: dedicated to each job
- Network, filesystem: shared by all jobs

Job Queue

		#Nodes Requested	Time Requested
1		128	30 mins
2		64	24 hours
3		56	6 hours
4		192	12 hours
5		...	...
6		...	...

Compute nodes vs. login nodes

- Compute nodes: dedicated nodes for running jobs
 - Can only be accessed when they have been allocated to a user by the job scheduler
- Login nodes: nodes shared by all users to compile their programs, submit jobs etc.
- Service/managements nodes: I/O nodes, etc.

Supercomputers vs. commodity clusters

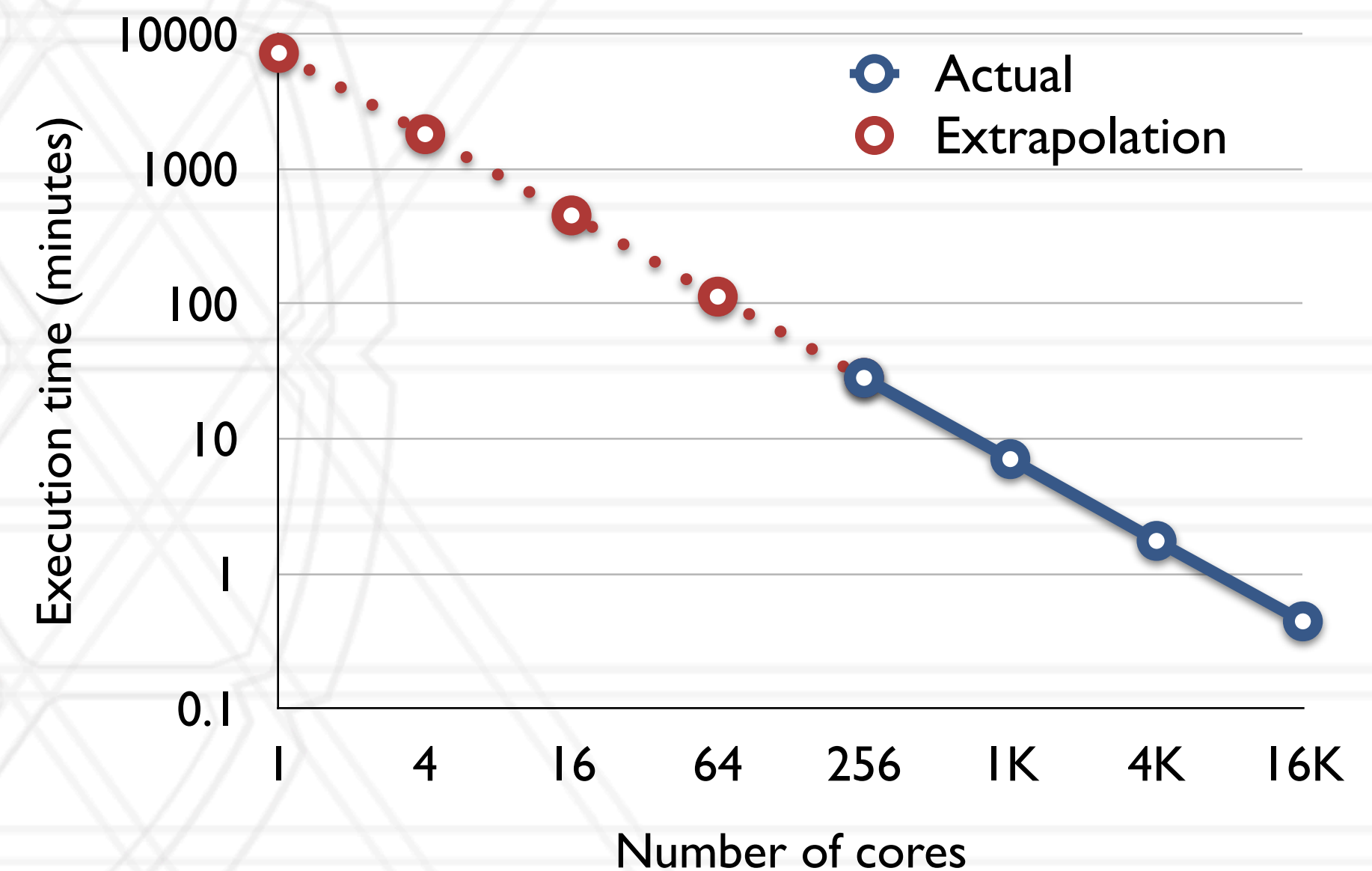
- Supercomputer refers to a large expensive installation, typically using custom hardware
 - High-speed interconnect
 - IBM Blue Gene, Cray XT, Cray XC
- Cluster refers to a cluster of nodes, typically put together using commodity (off-the-shelf) hardware

Serial vs. parallel code

- Thread: a thread or path of execution managed by the operating system (OS)
 - Threads share the same memory address space
- Process: heavy-weight, processes do not share resources such as memory, file descriptors etc.
- Serial or sequential code: can only run on a single thread or process
- Parallel code: can be run on one or more threads or processes

Scaling and scalable

- Scaling: the action of running a parallel program on 1 to n processes
 - 1, 2, 3, ..., n
 - 1, 2, 4, 8, ..., n
- Scalable: A program is *scalable* if its performance improves when using more resources



Weak versus strong scaling

- Strong scaling: *Fixed total* problem size as we run on more resources (processes or threads)
 - Sorting n numbers on 1 process, 2 processes, 4 processes, ...
- Weak scaling: Fixed problem size per process but *increasing total* problem size as we run on more resources
 - Sorting n numbers on 1 process
 - $2n$ numbers on 2 processes
 - $4n$ numbers on 4 processes

Speedup and efficiency

- (Parallel) Speedup: Ratio of execution time on one process to that on p processes

$$\text{Speedup} = \frac{t_1}{t_p}$$

- (Parallel) efficiency: Speedup per process

$$\text{Efficiency} = \frac{t_1}{t_p \times p}$$

Amdahl's law

- Speedup is limited by the serial portion of the code
 - Often referred to as the serial “bottleneck” — the portion that cannot be parallelized
- Lets say only a fraction f of the program (in terms of execution time) can be parallelized on p processes

$$\text{Speedup} = \frac{1}{(1 - f) + f/p}$$

Amdahl's law

$$\text{Speedup} = \frac{1}{(1 - f) + f/p}$$

```
fprintf(stdout, "Process %d of %d is on %s\n",
    myid, numprocs, processor_name);
fflush(stdout);

n = 10000;          /* default # of rectangles */
if (myid == 0)
    startwtime = MPI_Wtime();
```

```
MPI_Bcast(&n, 1, MPI_INT, 0, MPI_COMM_WORLD);

h = 1.0 / (double) n;
sum = 0.0;
/* A slightly better approach starts from large i and works back */
for (i = myid + 1; i <= n; i += numprocs)
{
    x = h * ((double)i - 0.5);
    sum += f(x);
}
mypi = h * sum;

MPI_Reduce(&mypi, &pi, 1, MPI_DOUBLE, MPI_SUM, 0, MPI_COMM_WORLD);
```

Total time on 1 process = 100s

Serial portion = 40s

Portion that can be parallelized = 60s

$$f = \frac{60}{100} = 0.6$$

$$\text{Speedup} = \frac{1}{(1 - 0.6) + 0.6/p}$$

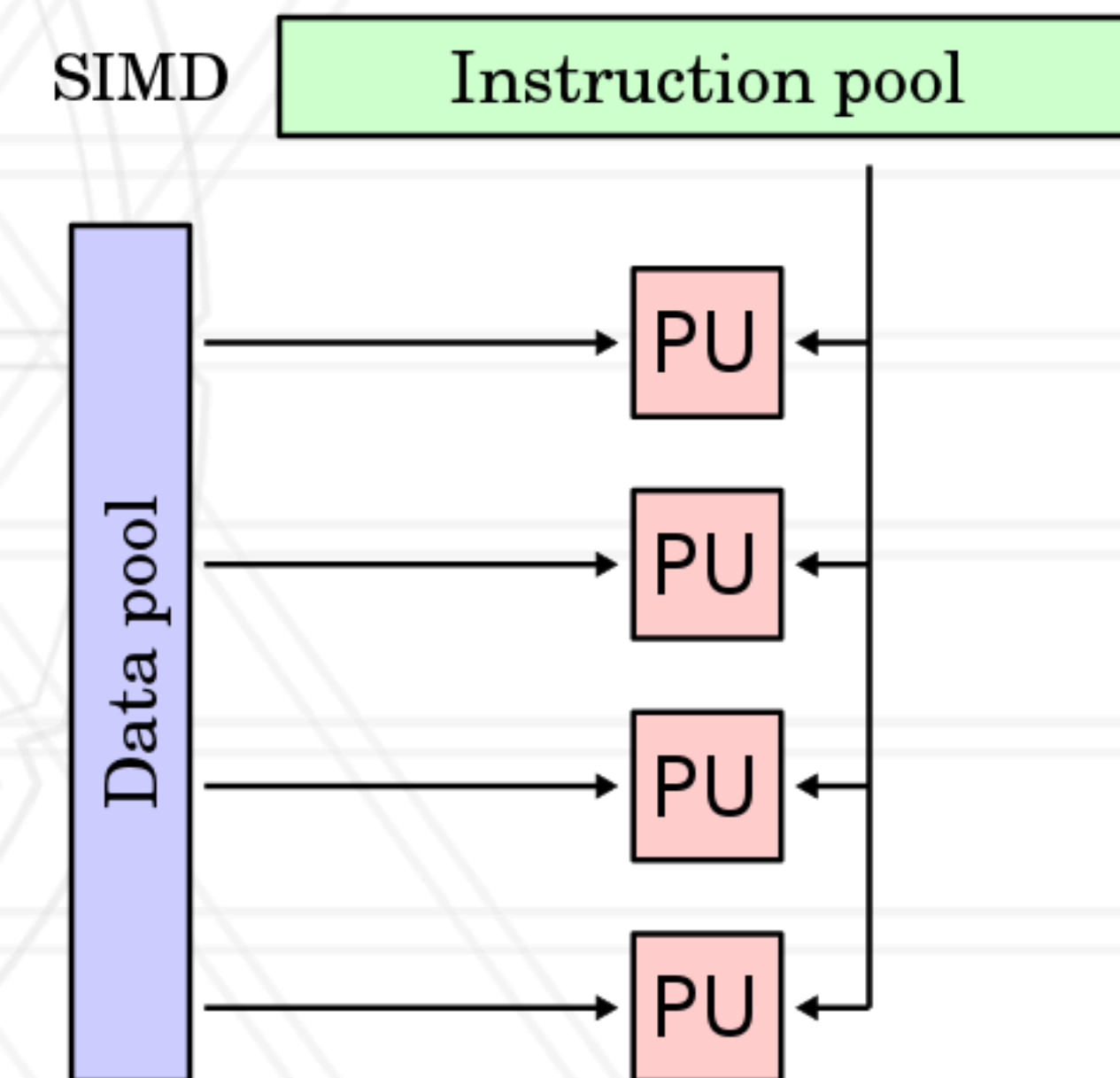
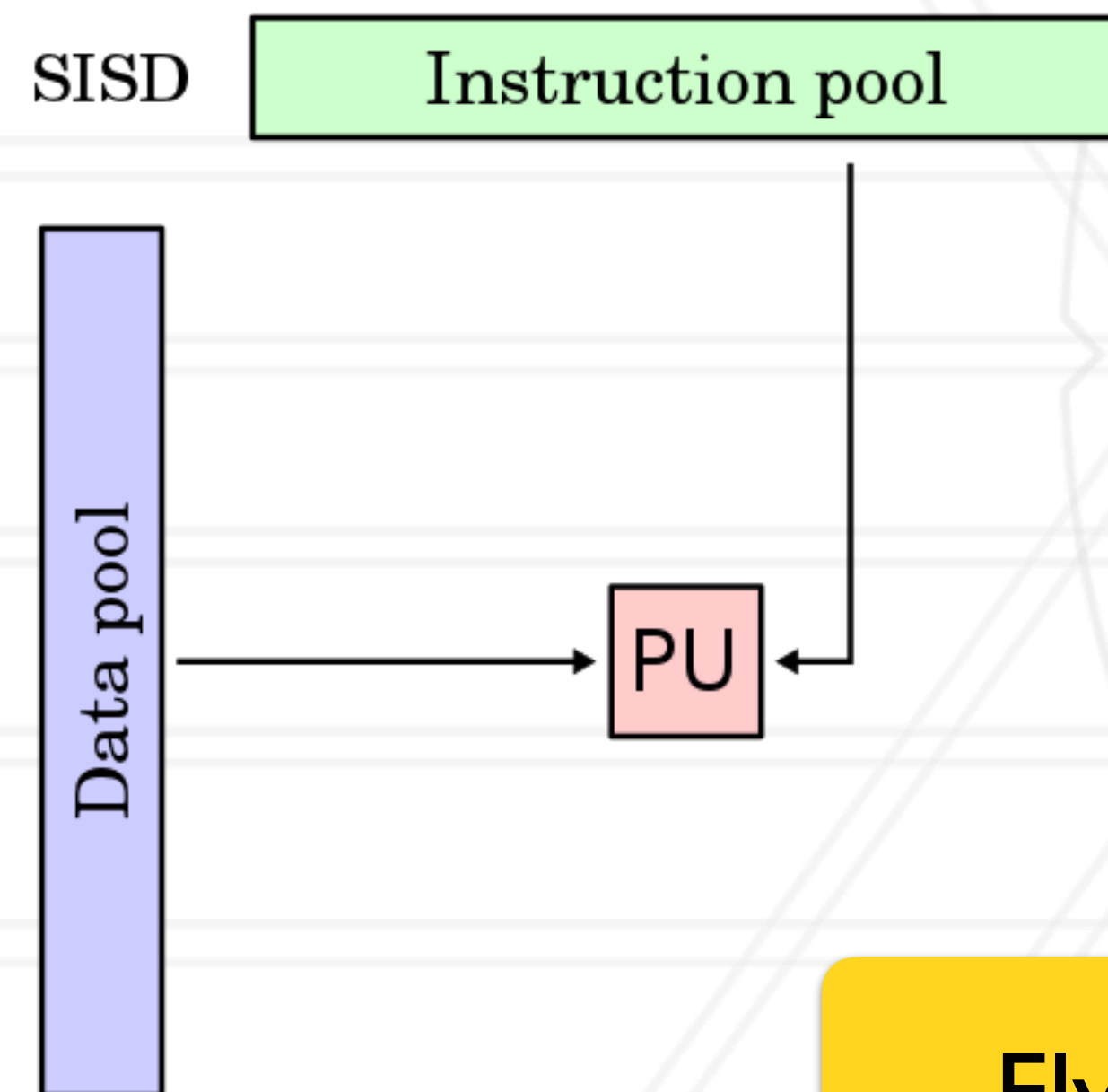
Communication and synchronization

- Each process may execute serial code independently for a while
- When data is needed from other (remote) processes, messaging is required
 - Referred to as communication or synchronization (or MPI messages)
- Intra-node communication: among cores within a node
- Inter-node communication: among cores on different nodes connected by a network
- Bulk synchronous programs: All processes compute simultaneously, then synchronize (communicate) together

Different models of parallel computation

SISD: Single Instruction Single Data

SIMD: Single Instruction Multiple Data



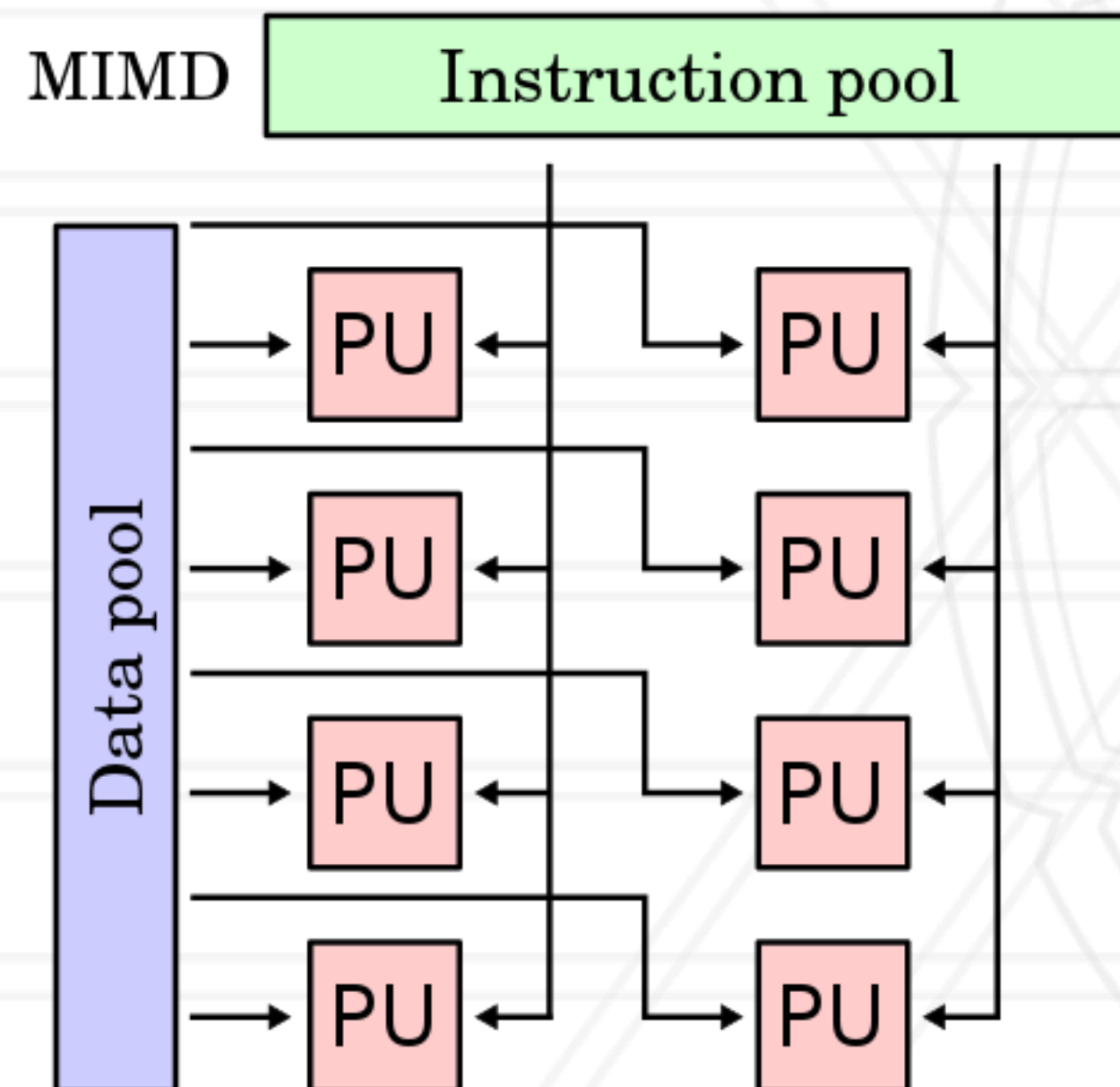
Flynn's Taxonomy

Example: Vector / array processors

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flynn's_taxonomy

Different models of parallel computation

MIMD: Multiple Instruction Multiple Data



- Two other variations
- SIMT: Single Instruction Multiple Threads
 - Threads execute in lock-step
 - Example: GPUs
- SPMD: Single program Multiple Data
 - All processes execute the same program but act on different data
 - Enables MIMD parallelization



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