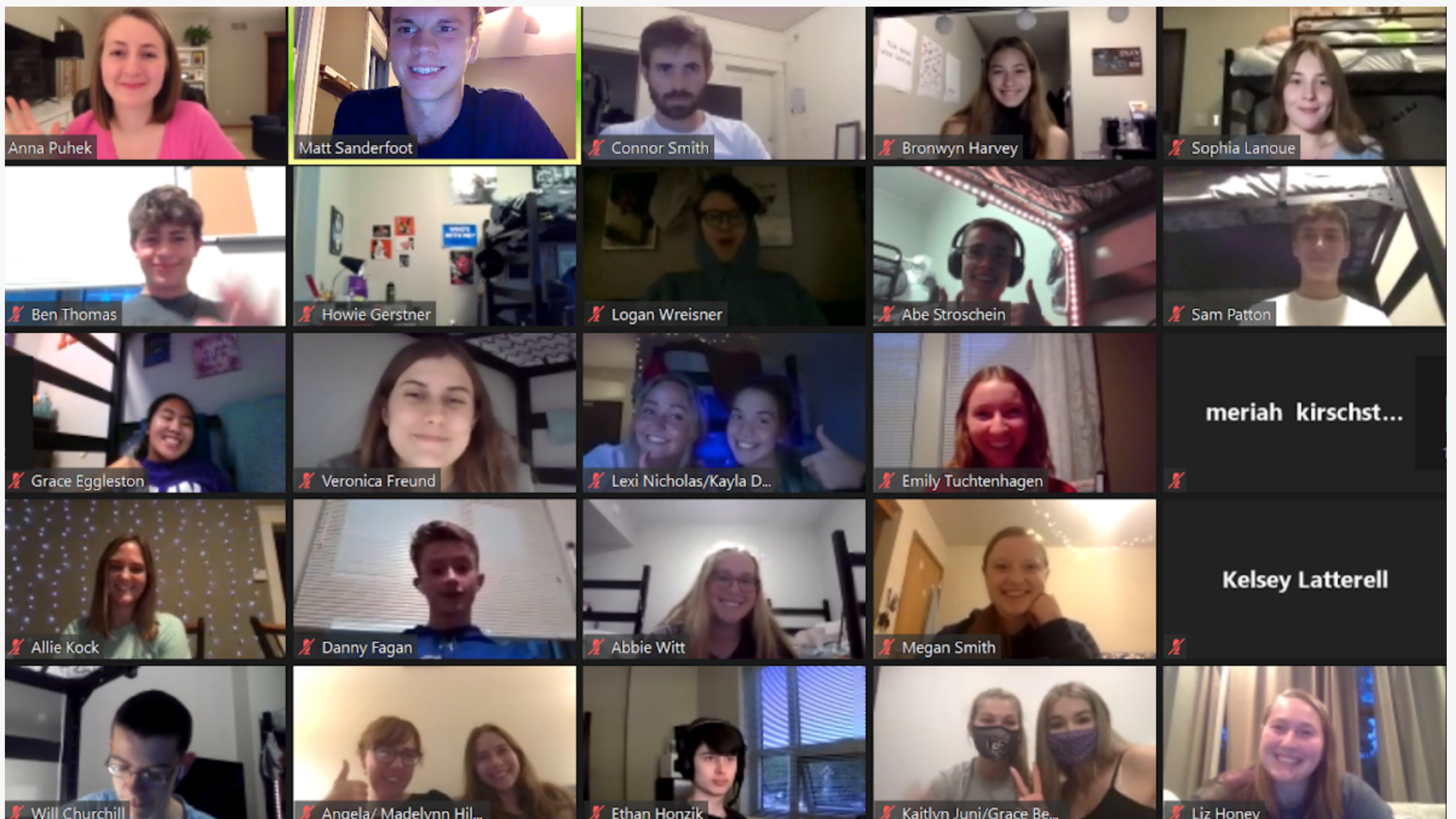


# The Scholars Newsletter



2020 December Edition  
The Aquinas Scholars Honors Program  
Editor: Ashley Burt



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# Congratulations

to these Aquinas Scholars for their nomination for the

## 2021 Tommie Award!

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Rachel  
Dahl



Sophia Hernandez  
Tragesser



Kathryn Van  
Sistine

The Tommie Award is presented each spring semester to a University of St. Thomas senior who, according to UST students, faculty, and staff, best represents the ideals of St. Thomas Aquinas through scholarship, leadership, and campus involvement.

# In case you missed it...

## Card Making for Troops



## Cookie Baking



# Scholars Journal

My experience with the PLAYbook  
Scholar: Emilia Fredrickson



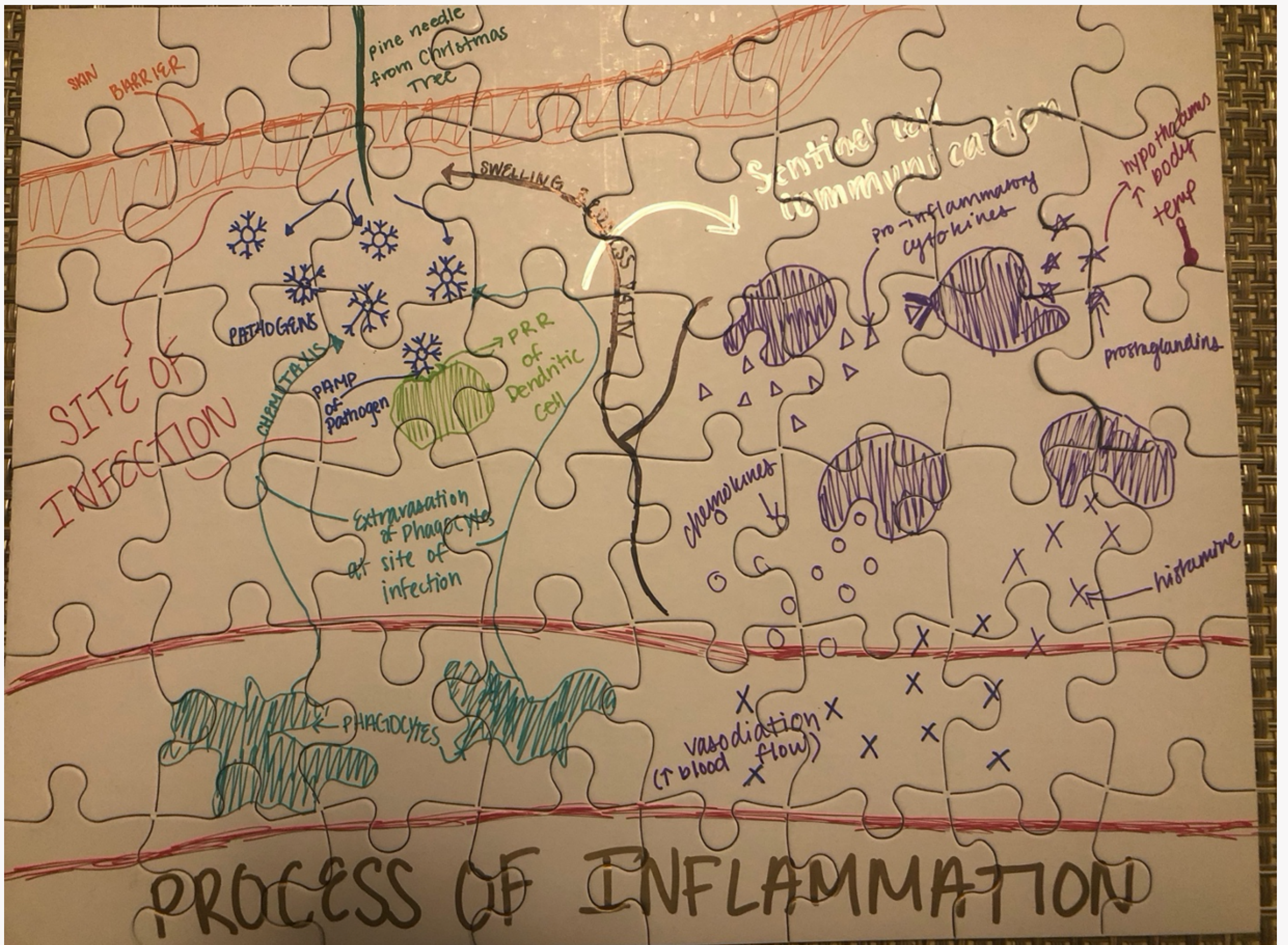
As a designer at the Playful Learning Lab at St. Thomas, I'm never sure what I'll be doing next. It could be creating a logo for a virtual summer camp, hearing of plans to send art to space, or working on another aspect of communications and branding. Throughout my time at the Playful Learning Lab, one of the most personally enriching projects that I had the chance to work on was the PLAYbook. I worked as a design lead on this project, which involved creating content for educational coloring/activity books in English, Spanish, Somali, and Arabic. I worked with an amazing and talented team on this project

and learned so many things, but the most significant takeaway from this project was a deeper appreciation for the impact that can be made through teamwork. Although each person working on this project was also a student and was working on a number of other projects, each of us were able to contribute in our area of expertise in order to produce content that was both professional and timely.

In working on the PLAYbook, I was able to be a part of efforts that brought free and educational creative materials to local communities. In addition to creating and printing 5 different volumes of the PLAYbook to date, my team has also helped with coordinating strategic drop-offs of the books throughout the Twin Cities. By doing so, the books in each specific language are to be placed in locations where they can best serve local communities. PLAYbooks are not only free; they also come with a free pack of crayons and require no additional materials. Working on the PLAYbook has truly opened my eyes to the power of free and accessible activities for kids, especially during the pandemic which has left many families struggling financially and without the normal opportunities of free activities for children. Thanks to my team and the Playful Learning Lab, I was able to both learn and provide materials for others to learn as well, which is something I am very grateful for.

# Scholars Journal

Online Learning  
Scholar: Christine Sangano



One particularly interesting aspect of online learning is how some professors find alternative ways for students to engage with the course's material. The image above shows a puzzle I created depicting the process of inflammation for my Principles of Immunology class with Dr. Colin Martin. This assignment helped me make more conceptual sense of this process and offered me a more creative license while mentally solidifying the material.

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# Scholars Journal

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## Does Science Fiction Have a Purpose? Scholar: Elise Rodich

Science fiction is a wildly popular genre, for good reason. It discusses the possibility of a world that exists beyond our own – life, technology, and science that we can only speculate about. Although the reasoning behind the popularity of science fiction makes sense, the understanding of the purpose behind why it is written is not nearly as clear. The article “Does Science Fiction Have a Purpose” states that “Good science fiction should be a cognitive tool for philosophically guessing what we might find in reality. Science fiction is fictionalized thought experiments ... The real purpose of science fiction is to present philosophical insights into the event horizon between what is known and what is not.” The idea that science fiction is a fictionalized thought experiment provides an interesting look at why this genre continues to be written – it is a human way of considering what could exist beyond what we already know.

Others say that science fiction is written because “The old way of communicating science was known as the “deficit model”. It is the idea that the public has a deficit of understanding, so experts simply need to feed them more facts. To this day, scientists still favor focusing on facts and accurate reporting of science over other communication strategies such as framing messages to resonate with audiences’ pre-existing beliefs.” (Let me entertain you – that’s how to get a science message across). If science fiction is created to communicate science to the general public, this makes a compelling argument. The layman, especially in times of earlier science fiction, would not know much about the typical science of the time. One of the best ways to communicate this in a way that is both understandable and

entertaining is through a story, which creates a venue for continued science fiction. Another important point is that, "Science fiction, perhaps more than any other modern genre of fiction, is often written with a social purpose or a goal. That purpose is rarely to explicitly predict the future ... Instead, science fiction is written to caution against the horrors of endless war [e.g., *The Forever War*], or to glorify human ingenuity [e.g., *The Martian*], or to explore the ramifications of a radically different political system" [e.g., *The Dispossessed*, 1984]. Instead of attempting to predict exactly where the future will go, it is often written to consider the possibility of other explorations of life, whether that be about extraterrestrial life or simply a utopic or dystopic future. Another concept of the purpose behind science fiction is to give a glimpse of the future, tap into the imagination, make something to remember, leave a mark on society, or to create a lucid ride into the unexplored. Still others say that, "science fiction is often very far from escapism, in fact you might say that science fiction is escape into reality ... it's a fiction which does concern itself with real issues: the origin of man; our future. In fact, I cannot think of any form of literature which is more concerned with real issues, reality" (*Sci-Fi Circuit: The Purpose and Value of Science Fiction*).

To truly discuss the purpose of science fiction, it is important to remember that we may never know. Each author writes their story for their own reason, and although many of those reasons may overlap or seem simple to the readers, just as with every story, perhaps we should spend less time wondering the purpose and instead appreciate the work that was created.



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# Scholars Journal

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Mesoamerican Art Inspiration  
Scholar: Patrick Johnson



Like many others, I have been struggling with extreme boredom during this time of COVID-19. I have found that drawing has helped me to relax and provide a brief escape from the unusual state of the world. I am far from a professional artist, but there is something calming about trying to keep a steady hand and color in the lines. This piece was inspired by a Mesoamerican art history class I took this semester. I hope everyone is finding ways to take care of their mental health in these trying times!

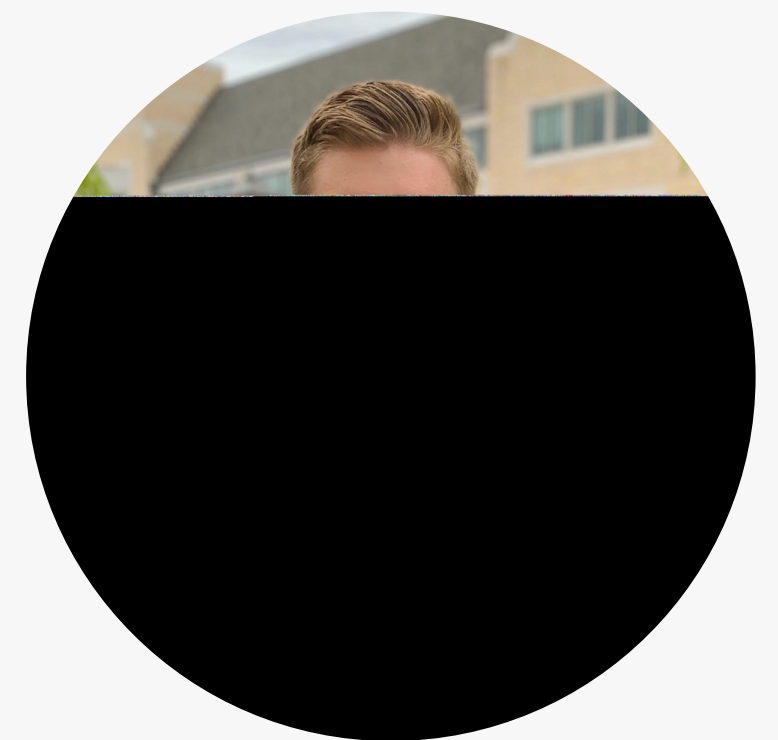
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