



# IS NEUROMORPHIC COMPUTING READY FOR PRIME TIME?

Brad Aimone

Center for Computing Research

Sandia National Laboratories



# AI IS DISRUPTING COMPUTING IN MANY WAYS

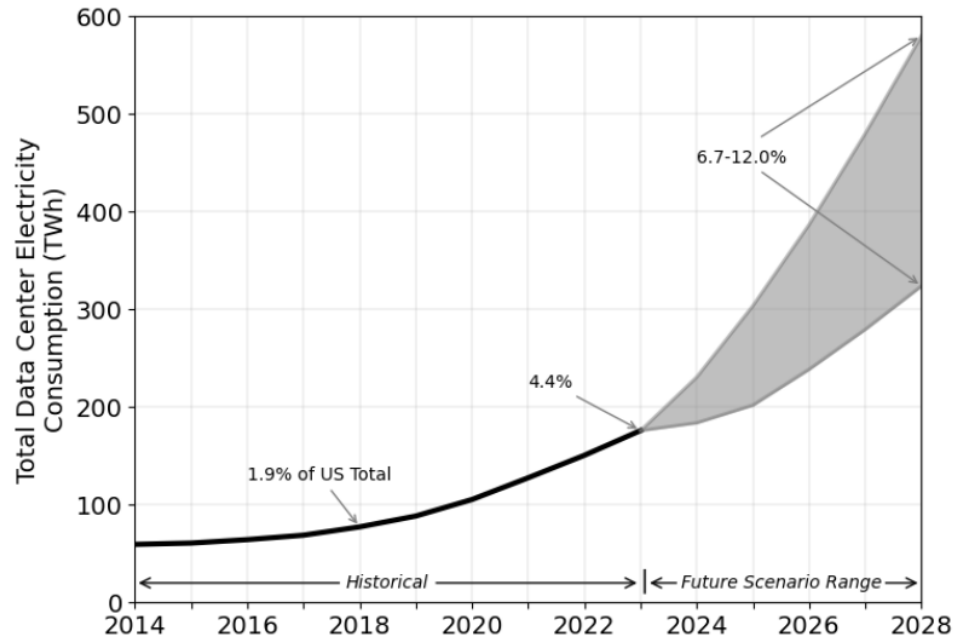
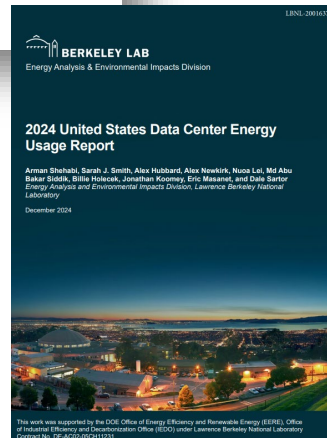


Figure ES-1. Total U.S. data center electricity use from 2014 through 2028.



**OVERARCHING FINDING:** The combination of increasing demands for computing with the technology and market challenges in HPC requires an intentional and thorough reevaluation of ASC's approach to algorithms, software development, system design, computing platform acquisition, and workforce development. *Business-as-usual will not be adequate.*

The approach used to reach petascale and now exascale capabilities is unlikely to be sufficient for the next two decades. Instead, NNSA will need to reevaluate how its mission problems, not limited to physics simulations, are best solved through advanced computing, and rethink what type of models, algorithms, and data analysis techniques are suited to each problem; what computing capabilities will be needed; and how it can best acquire those capabilities.

Owing to a confluence of technology, marketplace, and workforce challenges, NNSA's ASC program is at a critical crossroads. The program has for decades delivered impressive and state-of-the-art predictive simulation capabilities using in-house expertise in applied mathematics, computer science, and the physical sciences, along with research and development (R&D) investments in the computer vendor community. However, the current deployment model is not likely to be sufficient for future NNSA missions.



Charting a Path in a Shifting Technical and Geopolitical Landscape

Post-Exascale Computing for the National Nuclear Security Administration

Committee on Post-Exascale Computing for the National Nuclear Security Administration  
Computer Science and Telecommunications Board  
Division on Engineering and Physical Sciences





***In-memory computation***

***Event-driven communication and  
computation***

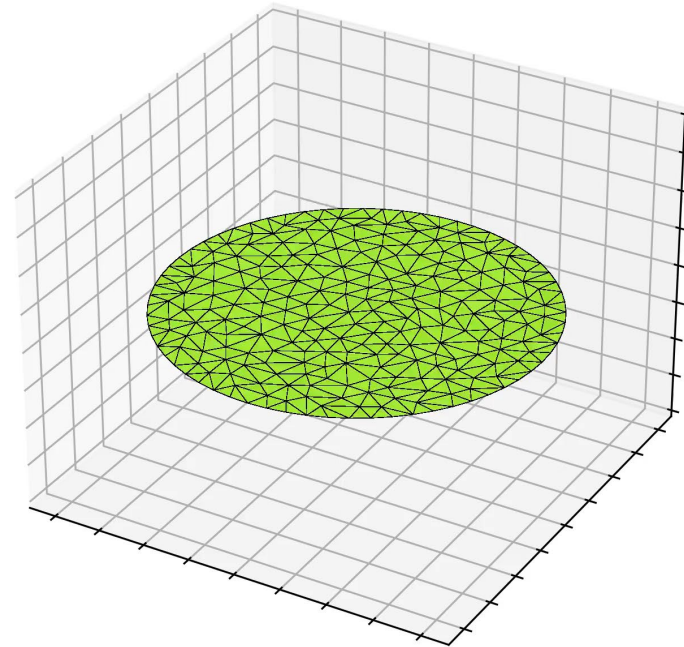
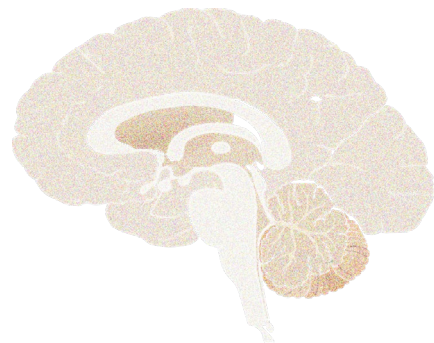
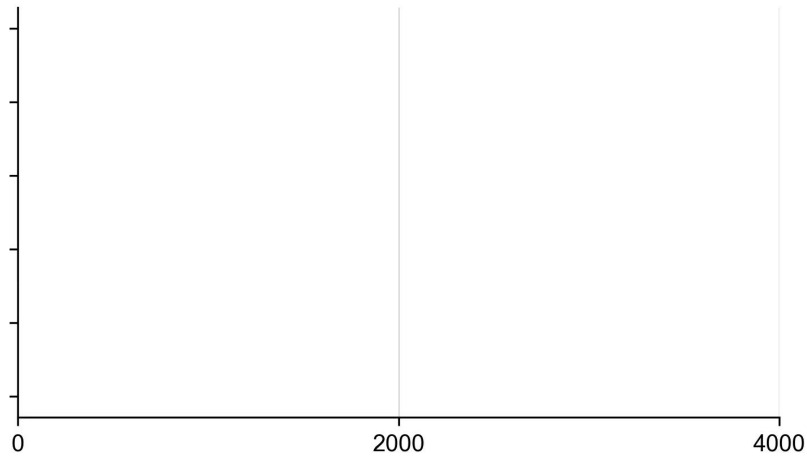
***Asynchronous***

***Learning and adaptivity***

***Ubiquitous stochasticity***

***...***





*Why you would want an architecture with brain-like activity to solve problems such as finite element simulations?*





## PART 1:

# WHAT IS NEUROMORPHIC COMPUTING?



# THERE IS NOT A SINGLE ROADMAP FOR NEUROMORPHIC COMPUTING

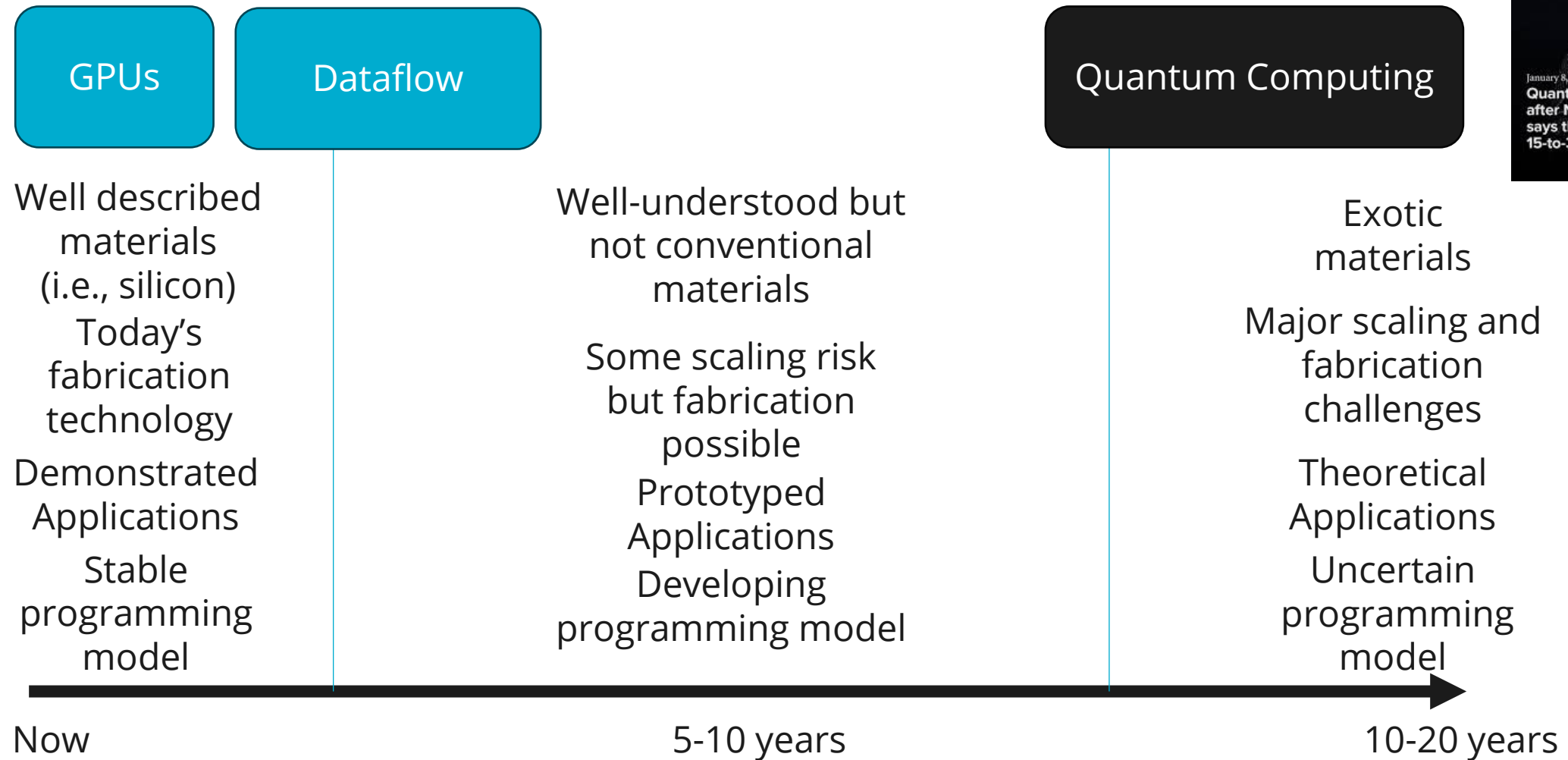


- ❑ Neuromorphic research exists across the technology stack
  - ❑ New post-CMOS materials (memristors, ECRAM, MTJs, quantum materials, ...)
  - ❑ Non-digital devices (analog, stochastic, optical, ...)
  - ❑ Bio-inspired circuits (reconfigurable, dendrites, learning, ...)
  - ❑ Neuromorphic architectures (spiking, event-driven sensors, ANN accelerators, ...)
  - ❑ Software paradigms (compilers, intermediate representations, ...)
  - ❑ Neuromorphic algorithms

*When is it ready for prime time?  
What is needed to get there?*

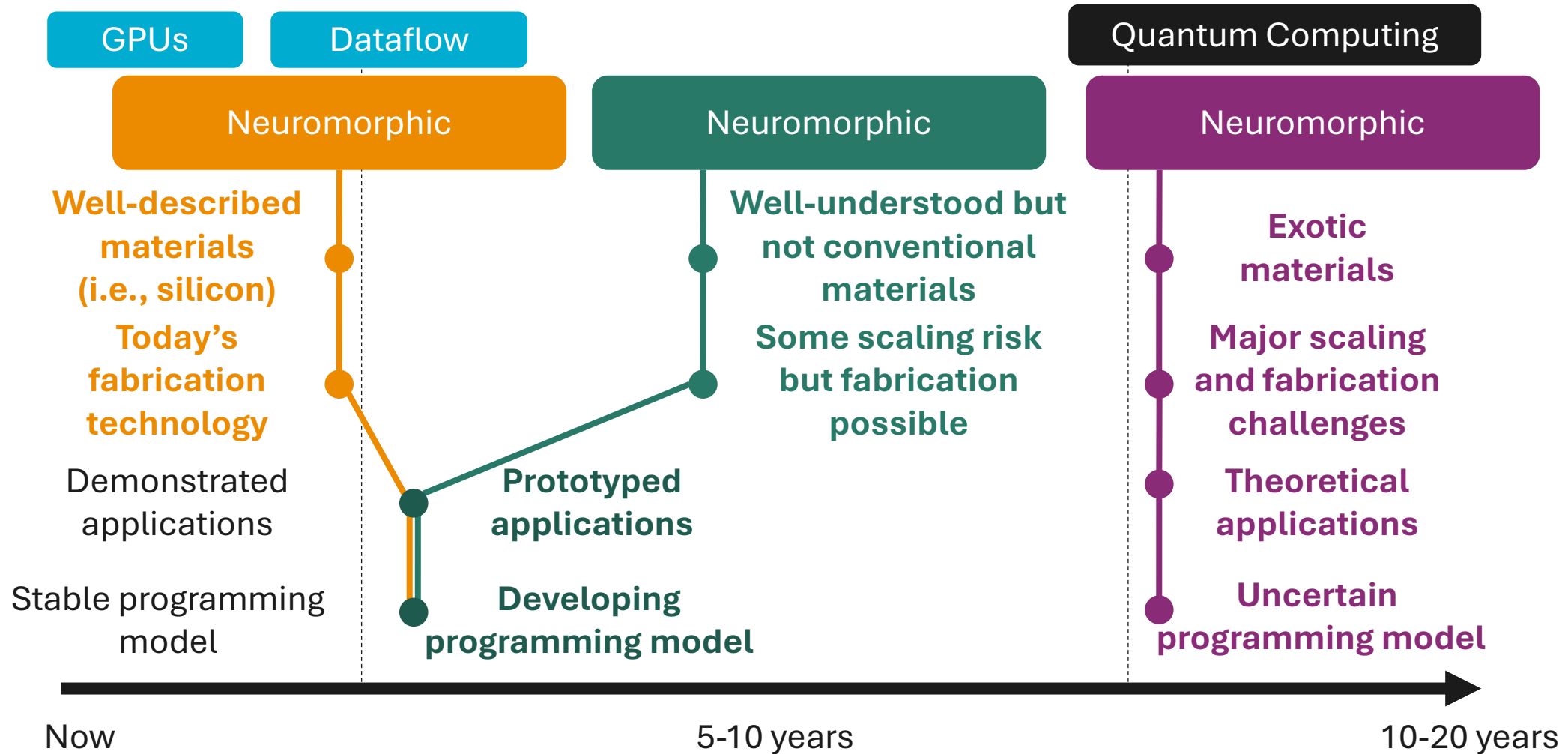


# WHEN WILL NEUROMORPHIC COMPUTING BE A REALITY?





# NEUROMORPHIC COMPUTING HAS PROMISE AT DIFFERENT TIME SCALES





# TODAY'S DIGITAL NEUROMORPHIC SYSTEMS ARE APPROACHING BRAIN-SCALE



- ❑ Systems like Intel's Loihi 2 and SpiNNCloud's SpiNNaker 2 can surpass 1 billion neurons
- ❑ Individual chips are ~1 million neurons and ~1 Watt
- ❑ Fully CMOS (little fabrication risk)
- ❑ Digital or Digital + Analog hybrid
- ❑ Future devices and novel materials can amplify potential impact

## Review

### Neuromorphic computing at scale

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-08253-8>

Received: 12 June 2023

Accepted: 18 October 2024

Published online: 22 January 2025

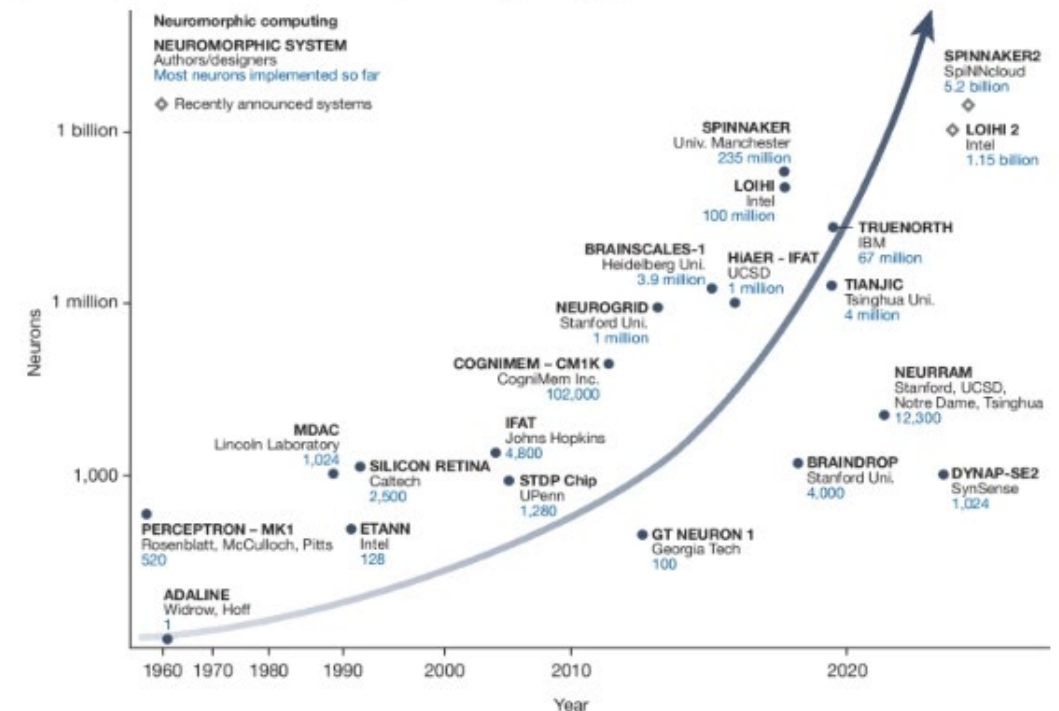
Check for updates

Neuromorphic computing is a brain-inspired approach to hardware and algorithm design that efficiently realizes artificial neural networks. Neuromorphic designers apply the principles of biointelligence discovered by neuroscientists to design efficient computational systems, often for applications with size, weight and power constraints. With the course for the development of approaches for creating features. We discuss challenges that need ecosystem necessary scaling neuromorphic fields, providing guidance computing who aims

As neural networks continue to affect a growing range of applications and further advances are sought, human brains remain a vibrant source of inspiration for modelling rich computational prowess. However, the pursuit of brain-inspired machine intelligence will require a change in the way we design and build computational platforms. One of the most promising research efforts in this direction is neuromorphic computing—a brain-inspired approach to hardware and algorithm design that efficiently realizes artificial neural networks<sup>1</sup>. Neuromorphic computing designers apply the principles of biointelligence discovered by neuroscientists to design efficient computational systems, often for applications with size, weight and power constraints. Extrapolation from the recent rate of progress in prototype neuromorphic systems suggests an enormous potential for future artificial intelligence (AI) applications: the market for neuromorphic computing chips is expected to reach US\$56.6 billion by 2026 (ref. 2). Some neuromorphic chips are rapidly entering the early-stage commercial market and have demonstrated capabilities to solve computational tasks at varying scales, with extremely low power budget and latency<sup>3–5</sup>. One reason for such an explosion is that these systems are versatile. For example, advances in traditional computing are often focused on a specific class of architecture—exascale for supercomputers or small scale for embedded systems—and the same class is typically not explored to influence both. However, neuromorphic computing has the potential to be disruptive in both classes by using homogeneous computing technology throughout. The question of whether the field is ready to enable substantial computational breakthroughs, such as the 'AlexNet moment'<sup>6</sup> described in Box 1, and how to comprehend the

<sup>1</sup>University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, TX, USA. <sup>2</sup>University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, TN, USA. <sup>3</sup>University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, USA. <sup>4</sup>Intel Labs, San Francisco, CA, USA. <sup>5</sup>Google DeepMind, Mountain View, CA, USA. <sup>6</sup>Italian Institute of Technology, Genova, Italy. <sup>7</sup>University of Zurich and ETH Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland. <sup>8</sup>National Institute of Standards and Technology, Gaithersburg, MD, USA. <sup>9</sup>SpinnCloud Systems GmbH, Dresden, Germany. <sup>10</sup>Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India. <sup>11</sup>University of Manchester, Manchester, UK. \*e-mail: [dhinesha.kudithipudi@utoronto.ca](mailto:dhinesha.kudithipudi@utoronto.ca)

Fig. 1: Progression of neuromorphic computing systems.



Kudithipudi et al., Nature 2025



NOT QUITE A MOLE OF NEURONS



... BUT MORE NEURONS THAN A MOLE



# WHAT IS NEUROMORPHIC COMPUTING TODAY?



- In digital silicon (CMOS) technology
  - Over 1 billion neuron system at Sandia
    - Roughly the number in a parrot or small primate brain
  - Neurons are “simulated” in an efficient way
  - Generally a leaky integrate-and-fire model
- Analog systems
  - Wide range of technologies, but far smaller
  - Emulate the brain’s biophysics in different materials
  - Wide range of neural dynamics emulated



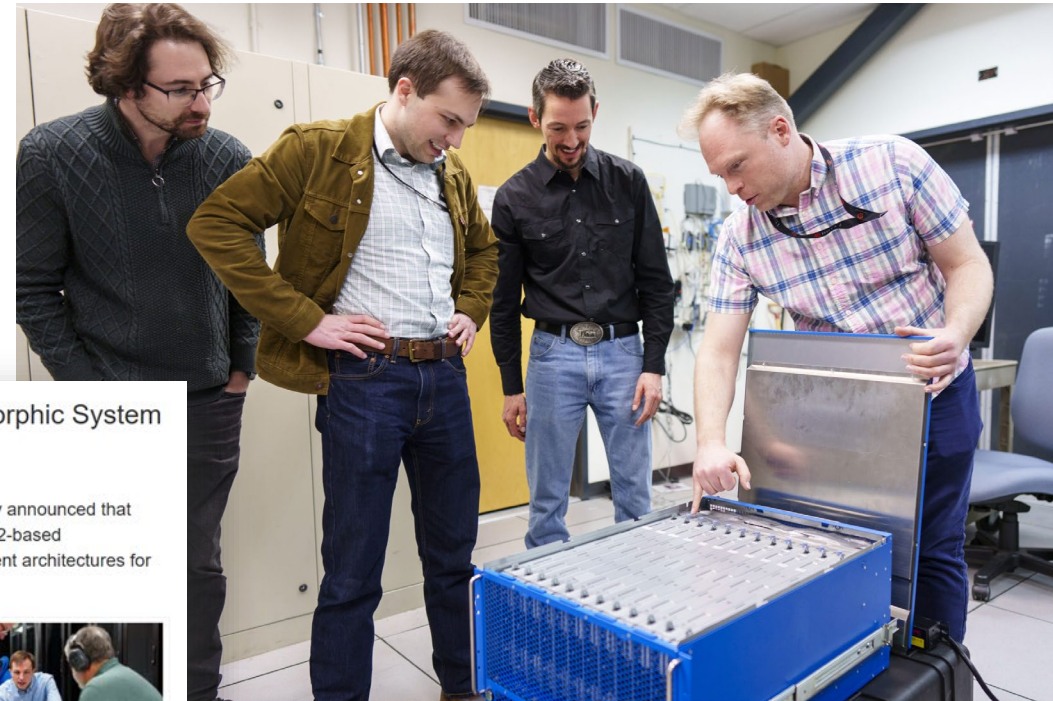
Left to right: William Chapman, Brad Theilman, Craig Vineyard, Mark Plagge



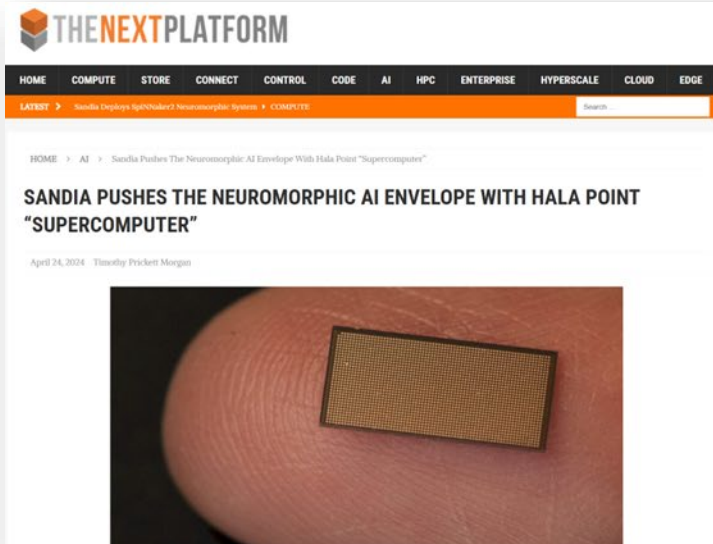
# WHAT IS NEUROMORPHIC COMPUTING TODAY?



- In digital silicon (CMOS) technology
  - Over 1 billion neuron system at Sandia
    - Roughly the number in a parrot or small primate brain
  - Neurons are “simulated” in an efficient way
  - Generally a leaky integrate-and-fire model



Left to right: William Chapman, Brad Theilman, Craig Vineyard, Mark Plagge



**HPC** wire

Since 1987 - Covering the Fastest Computers in the World and the People Who Run Them

- Home
- Topics
- Sectors
- Exascale
- Specials
- Resource Library
- Podcast
- Events
- Solution Channels
- Job Bank
- About

## Sandia Deploys SpiNNaker2 Neuromorphic System from SpiNNcloud June 5, 2025

DRESDEN, Germany, June 5, 2025 — [SpiNNcloud](#) today announced that [Sandia National Laboratories](#) has deployed a SpiNNaker2-based neuromorphic computing system to explore energy-efficient architectures for artificial intelligence and national security applications.

Developed by SpiNNcloud and based on research led by Steve Furber, designer of the original ARM architecture, SpiNNaker2 uses a large number of low-power processors to simulate spiking neural networks and support AI workloads.

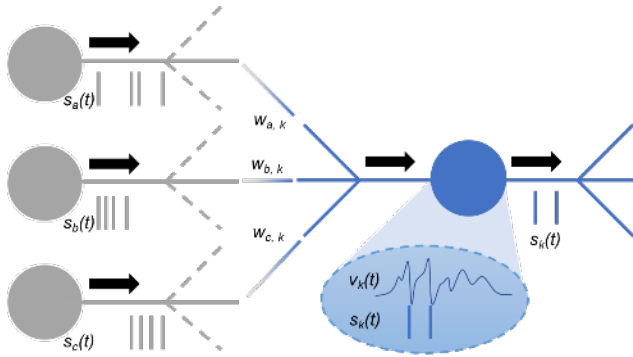
The deployment supports Sandia's broader efforts to investigate alternative computing architectures that reduce energy



SpiNNaker2 Installation at Sandia National Labs. Photo credit: Craig Fritz, Sandia National Labs.



# SPIKING NEUROMORPHIC TODAY: SCALABLE AND PROGRAMMABLE IN-MEMORY COMPUTE

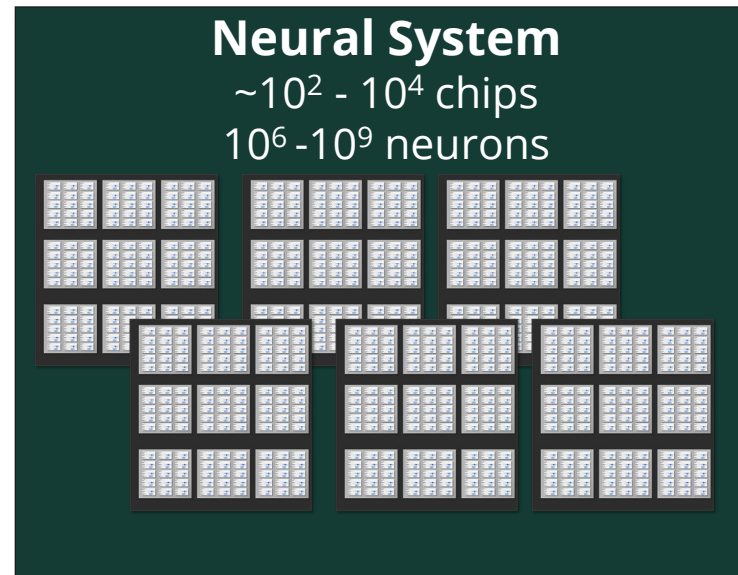
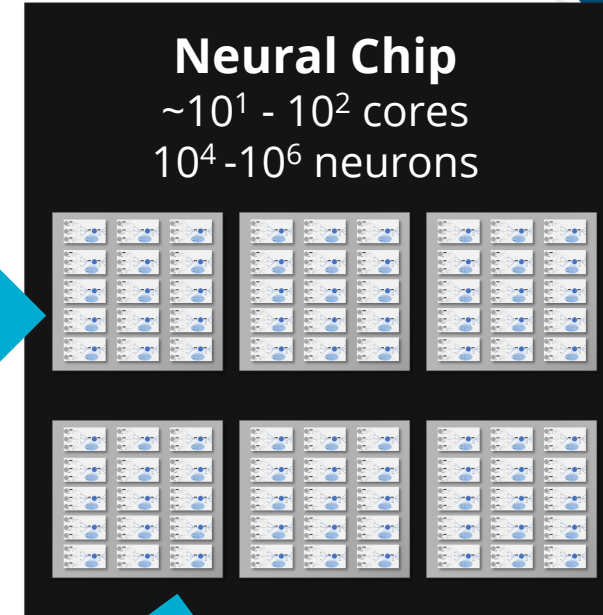
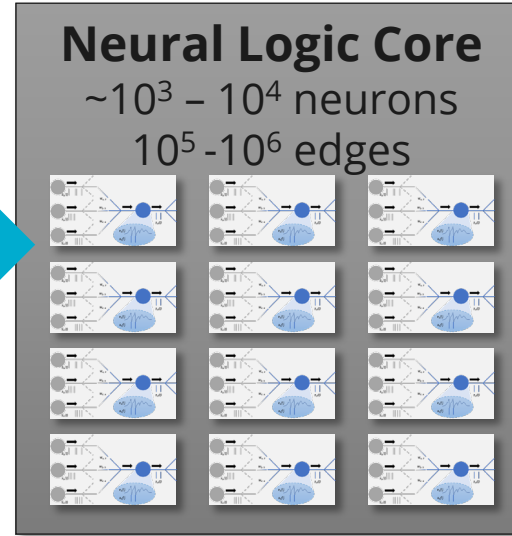


Computational Primitives:

Spiking Neurons (vertices/nodes)  
Synapses (connections/edges)

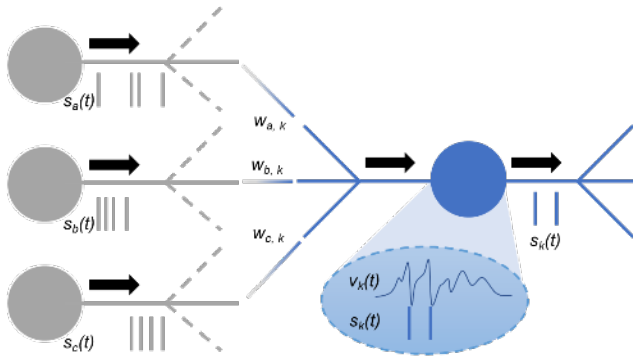
Programmable as arbitrary graphs

- Edges: Directed and weighted
- Nodes: Threshold gate logic + time
- *Artificial neural networks are a special case*
- Programmability, theoretical, analysis, and software are open research questions





# SPIKING NEUROMORPHIC TODAY: STILL FAR FROM THE ACTUAL BRAIN

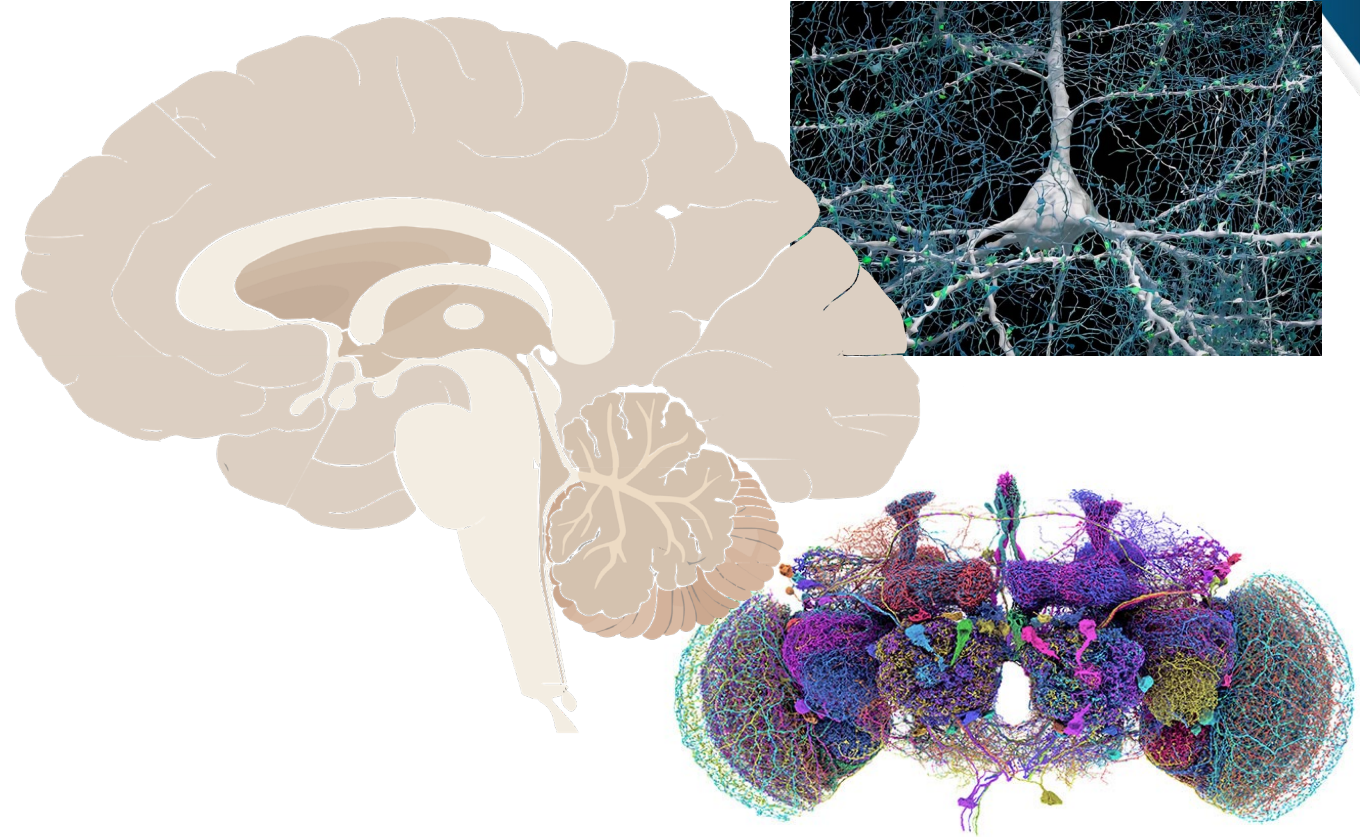


## Computational Primitives:

Spiking Neurons (vertices/nodes)  
Synapses (connections/edges)

## Programmable as arbitrary graphs

- Edges: Directed and weighted
- Nodes: Threshold gate logic + time
- *Artificial neural networks are a special case*
- Programmability, theoretical, analysis, and software are open research questions



Today's neuromorphic systems are far from the brain in terms of complexity and scale





## PART 2:

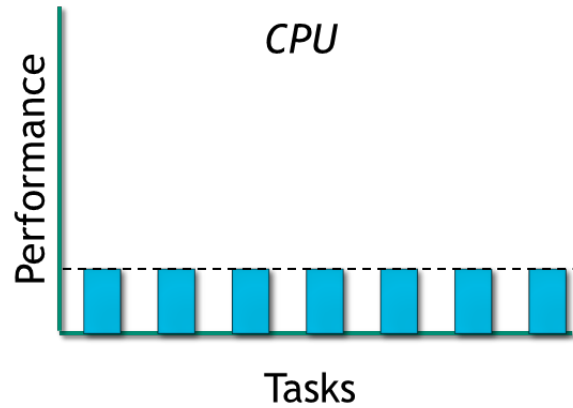
# WHAT MAKES NEURAL COMPUTING DIFFERENT?



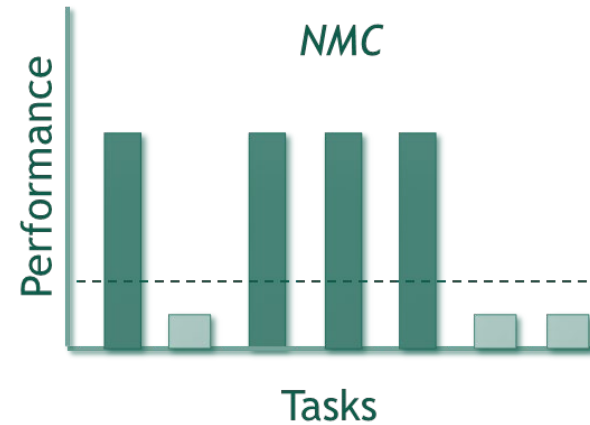
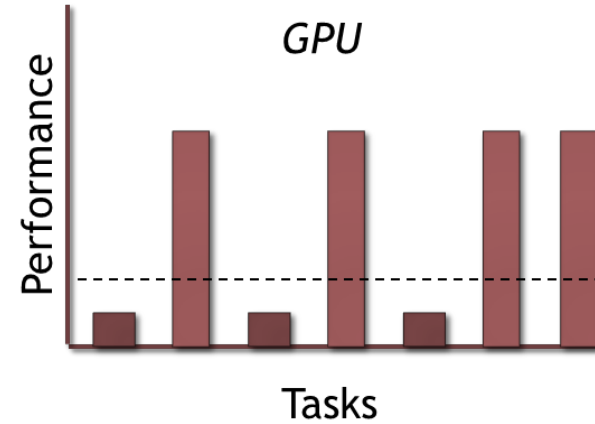
# NEUROMORPHIC IS LIKELY SIMILAR TO GPUS IN DEGREE OF SPECIALIZATION



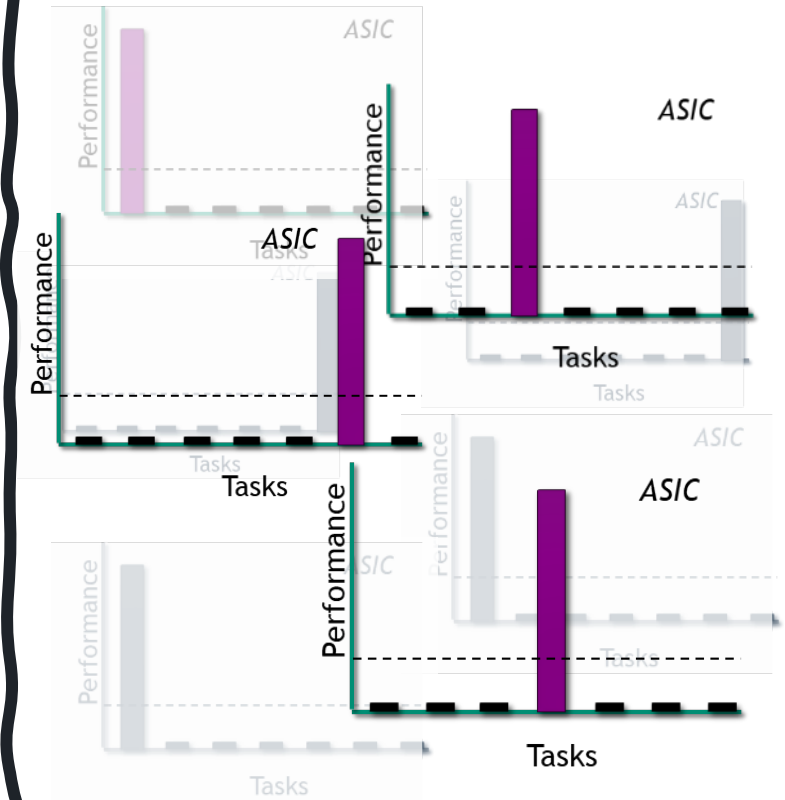
## Truly General Purpose



## Specialized General Purpose

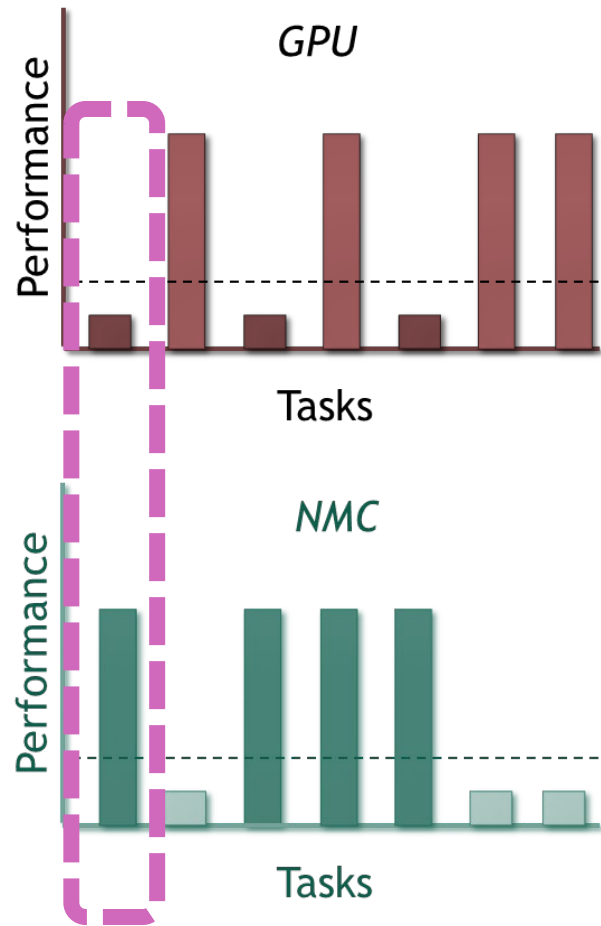


## Application Specific





# CLAIM: THE MAJOR CHALLENGE TO NEUROMORPHIC COMPUTING TODAY IS THE ALGORITHM IMPACT



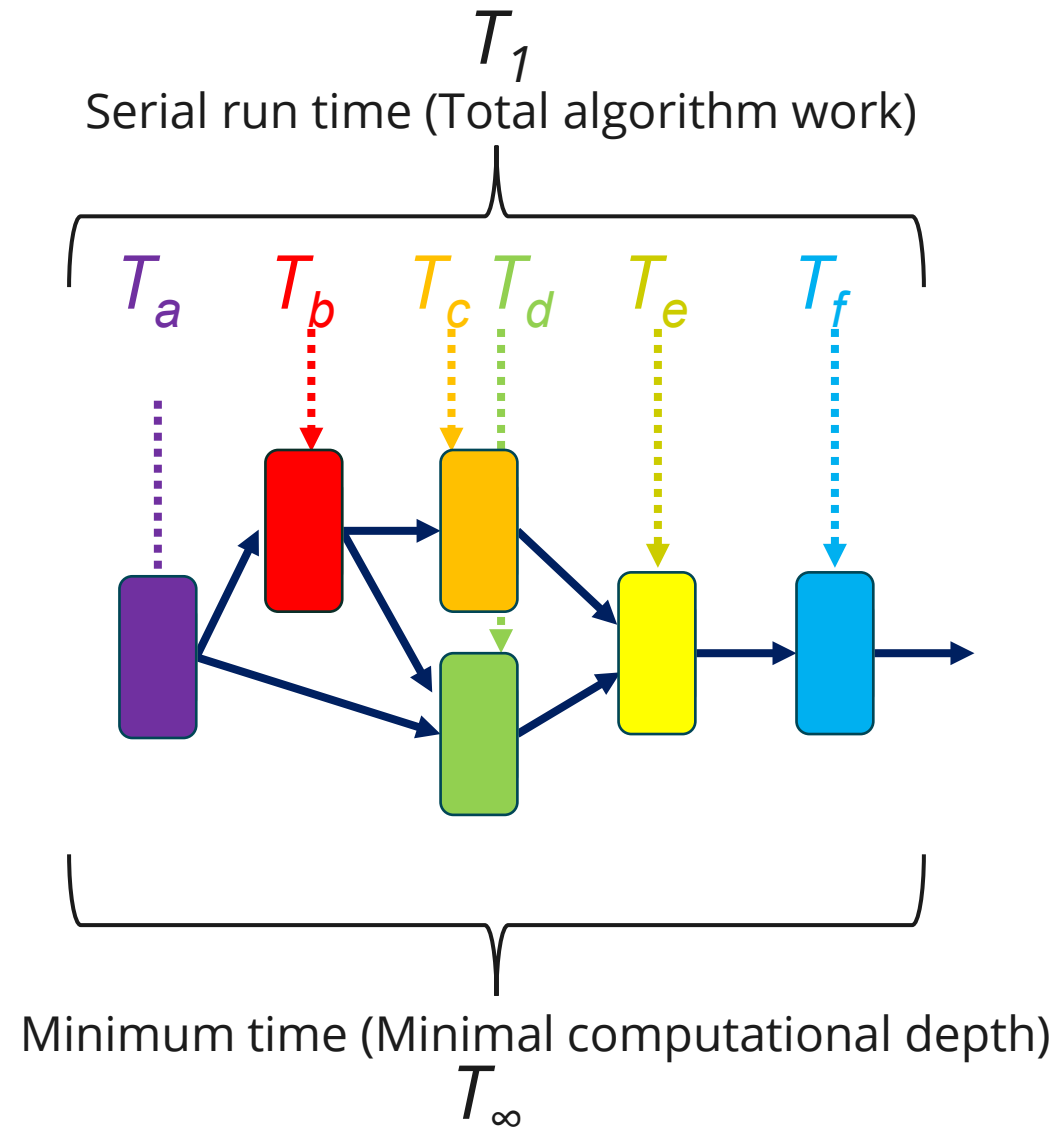
Identifying neuromorphic advantages today will

- ❑ Communicate the fundamental value proposition of neuromorphic hardware
- ❑ Determine how neuromorphic computing fits into the broader ecosystem (GPUs, accelerators, etc)
- ❑ Clarify what aspects of today's neuromorphic architectures need to be improved
- ❑ Justify cost of moving to new non-CMOS materials

**Hypothesis:** Identifying classes of computation that are preferentially accelerated by neuromorphic can perhaps do for those paradigms what GPUs did for AI

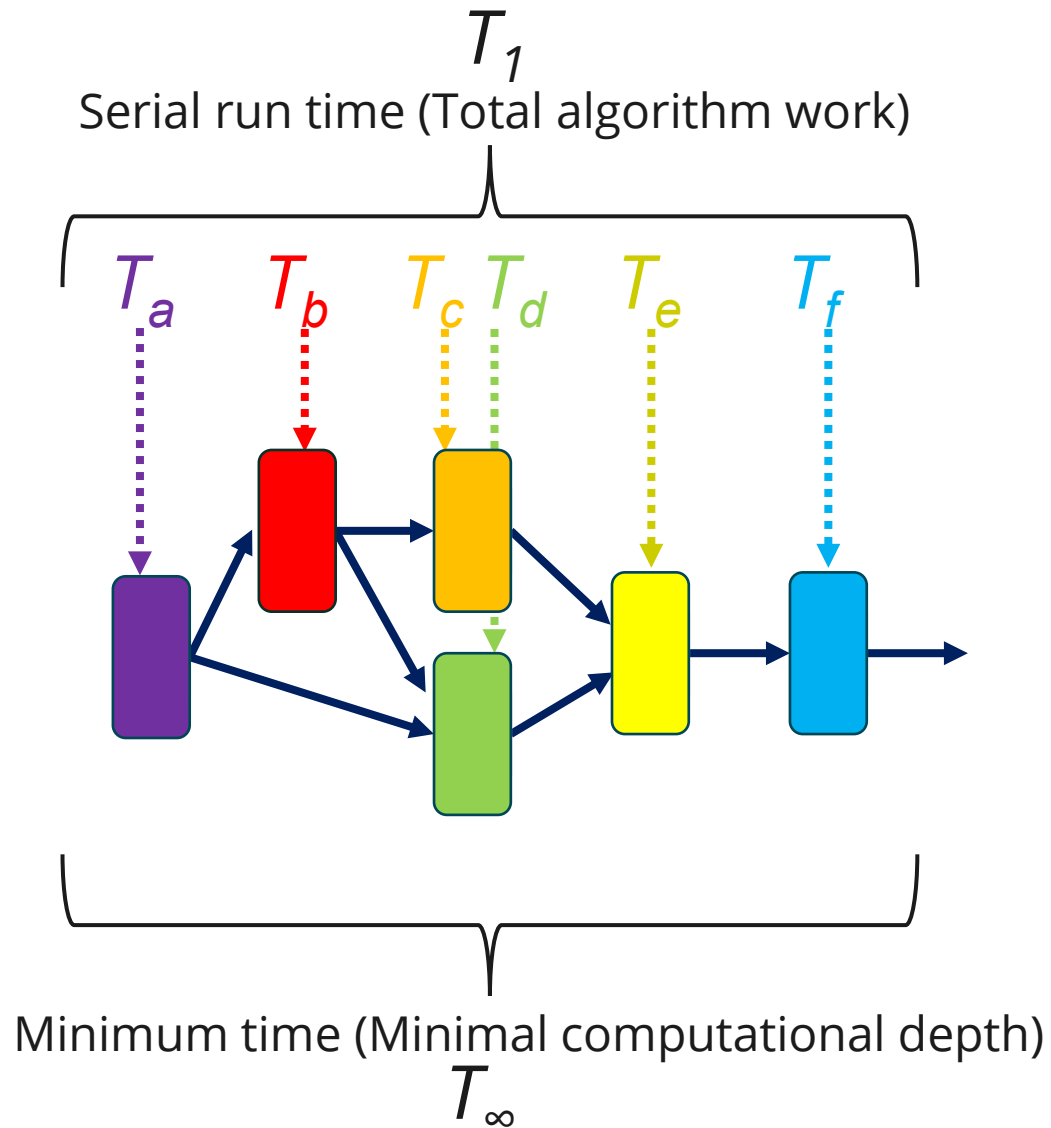


# UNDERSTANDING NEUROMORPHIC COMPLEXITY

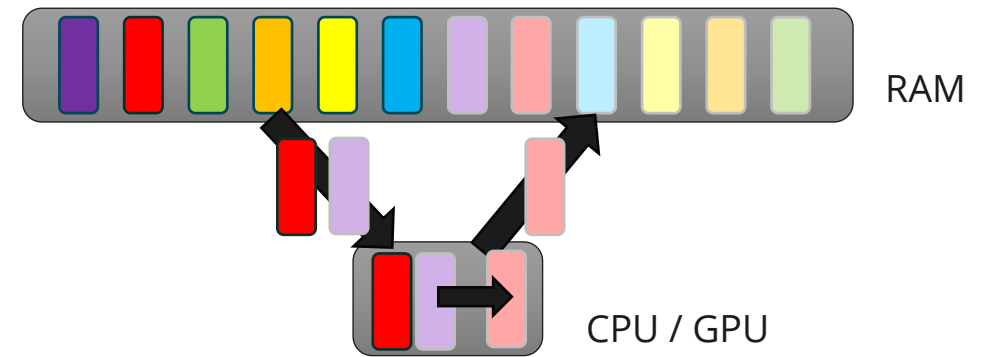




# IN-MEMORY COMPUTING FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGES SCALING



Conventional programs and data exist in memory

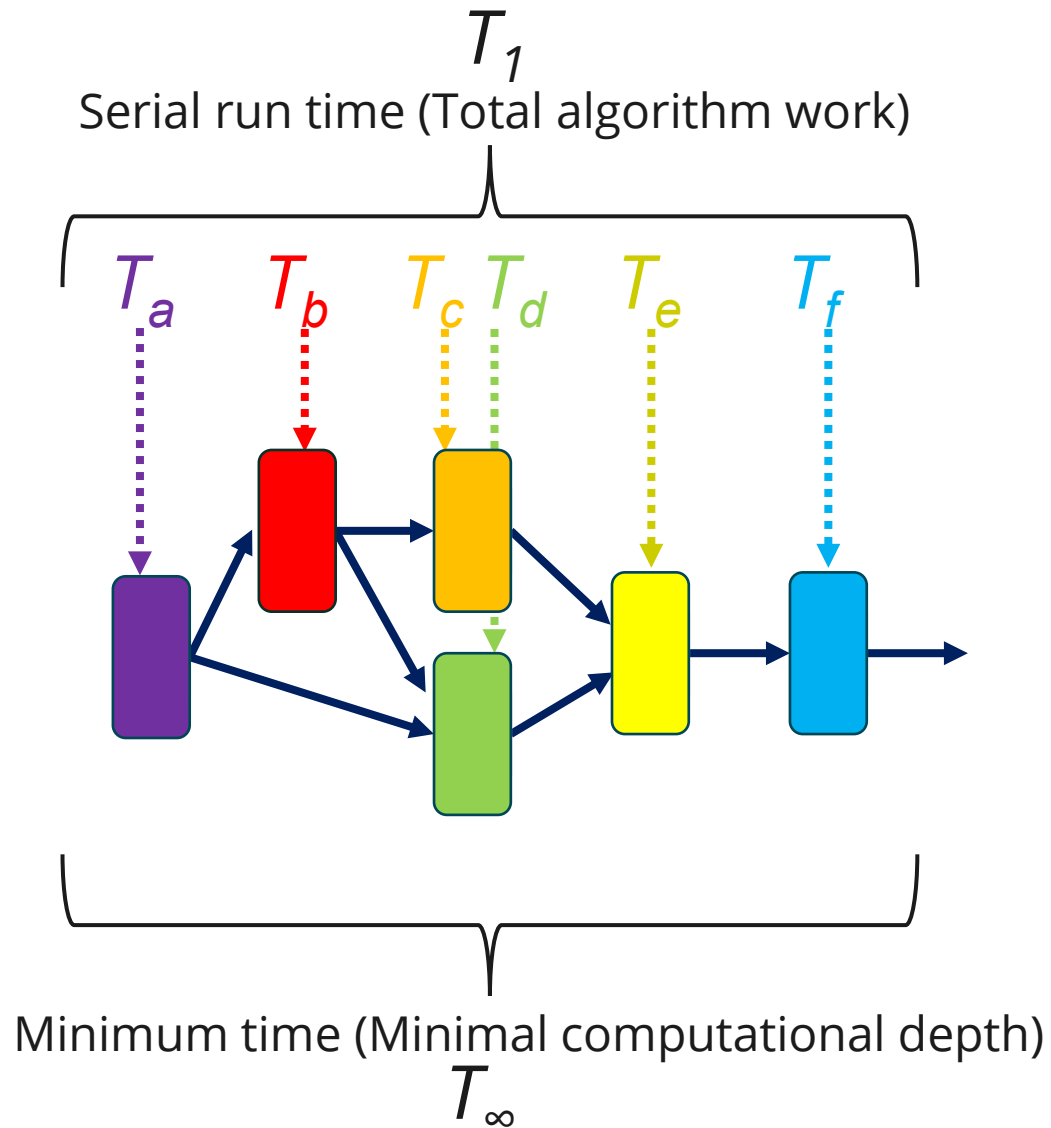


Neuromorphic programs must be fully realized in hardware



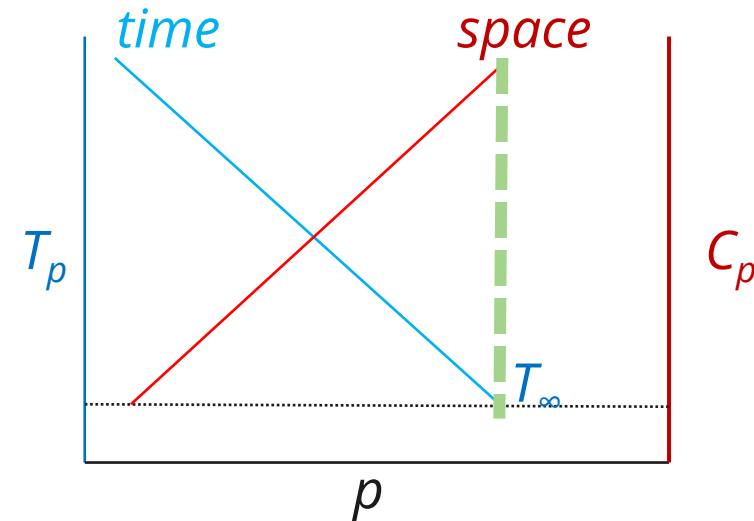


# THE SIZE OF ALGORITHM DICTATES TIME AND SPACE OF NEUROMORPHIC IMPLEMENTATION



Brent's Theorem: for  $p$  processors, run time  $T_p$  is bounded by graph depth  $T_\infty$

$$\max\left(T_\infty, \frac{T_1}{p}\right) \leq T_p \leq \frac{T_1}{p} + T_\infty$$



For conventional systems, time and space can be directly traded off

For NMC (and all in memory compute), *there is no tradeoff*



# IMPLICATION: NEUROMORPHIC CAN BE FAST... BUT YOU NEED A LOT OF NEURONS

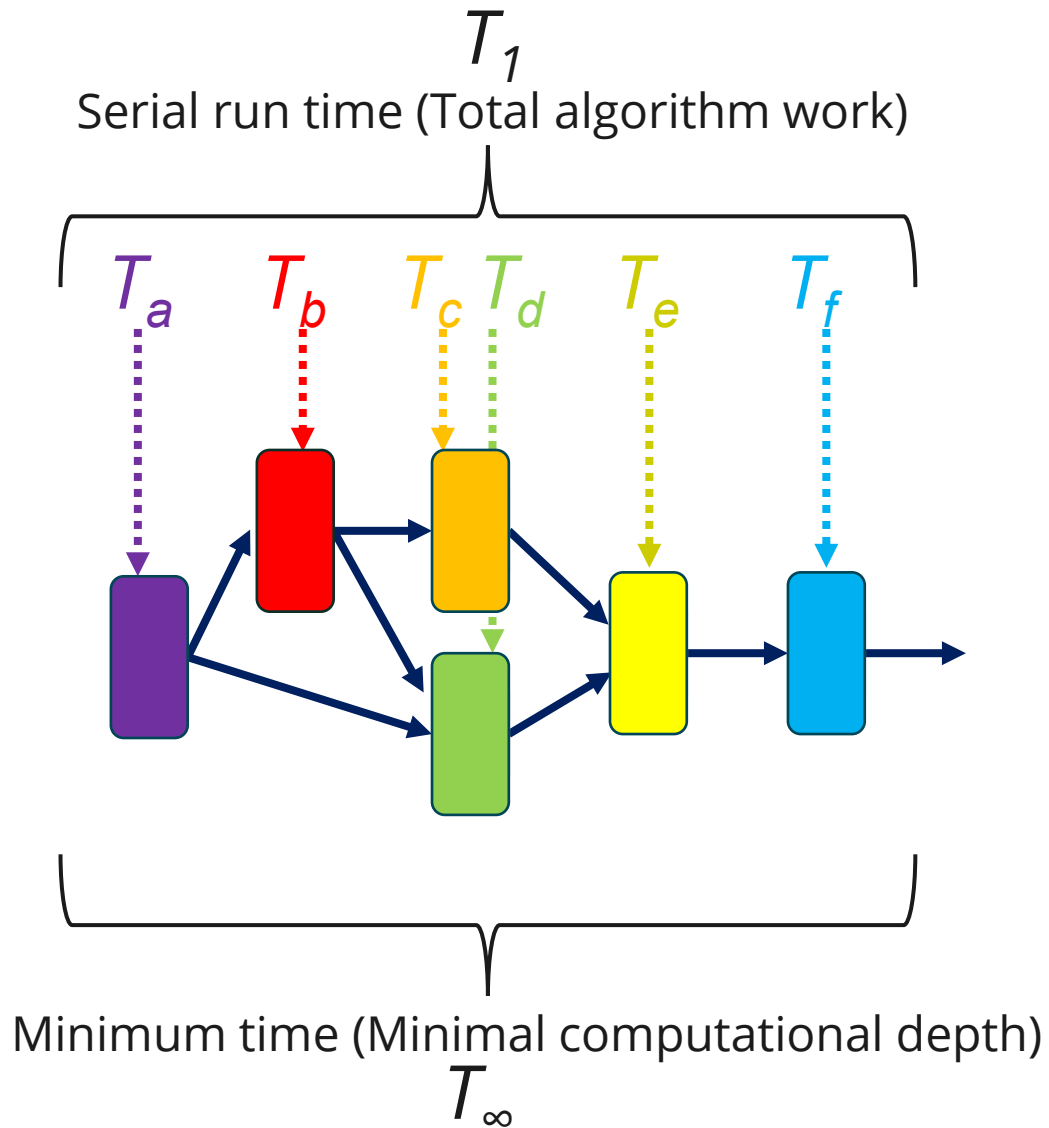
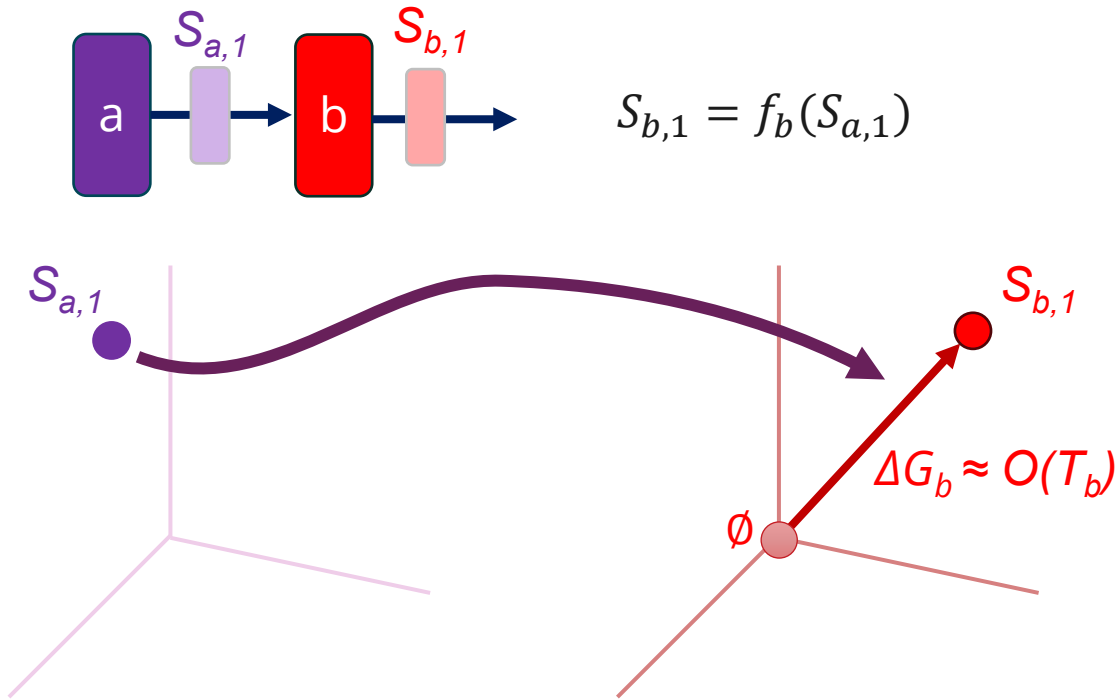


TABLE II  
TIME, SPACE, AND ENERGY SCALING OF NEUROMORPHIC AND  
CONVENTIONAL SYSTEMS

	Time ( $T$ )	Space ( $S$ )
<b>Conventional</b>		
<i>Ideal</i>	$O\left(\frac{T_1}{p}\right)$	$O(p)$
CPU (Realized)	$O(T_1)$	$O(1)$
GPU (Realized)	$O\left(\frac{T_1}{p \times p_{efficiency}}\right)$	$O(p)$
<b>Neuromorphic</b>		
<i>Ideal</i>	$O(T_{inf})$	$O(T_1)$
Realized	$O(N_{core} T_{inf})$	$O(T_1 / N_{core})$



# MEMORY ACCESS DOMINATES CONVENTIONAL ENERGY



Energy =  
Energy(operations) + **Energy(communication)**

## *Conventional*

- Energy costs (at least within processors) are largely communication to and from memory
- Because processors are shared, conventional algorithms must continually communicate algorithm states to and from memory.
- Memory updates are largely state-independent, so energy costs are relatively independent of initial and end states

***Conventional energy scales with total work***



# NEUROMORPHIC ENERGY DOES NOT SCALE THE SAME WAY

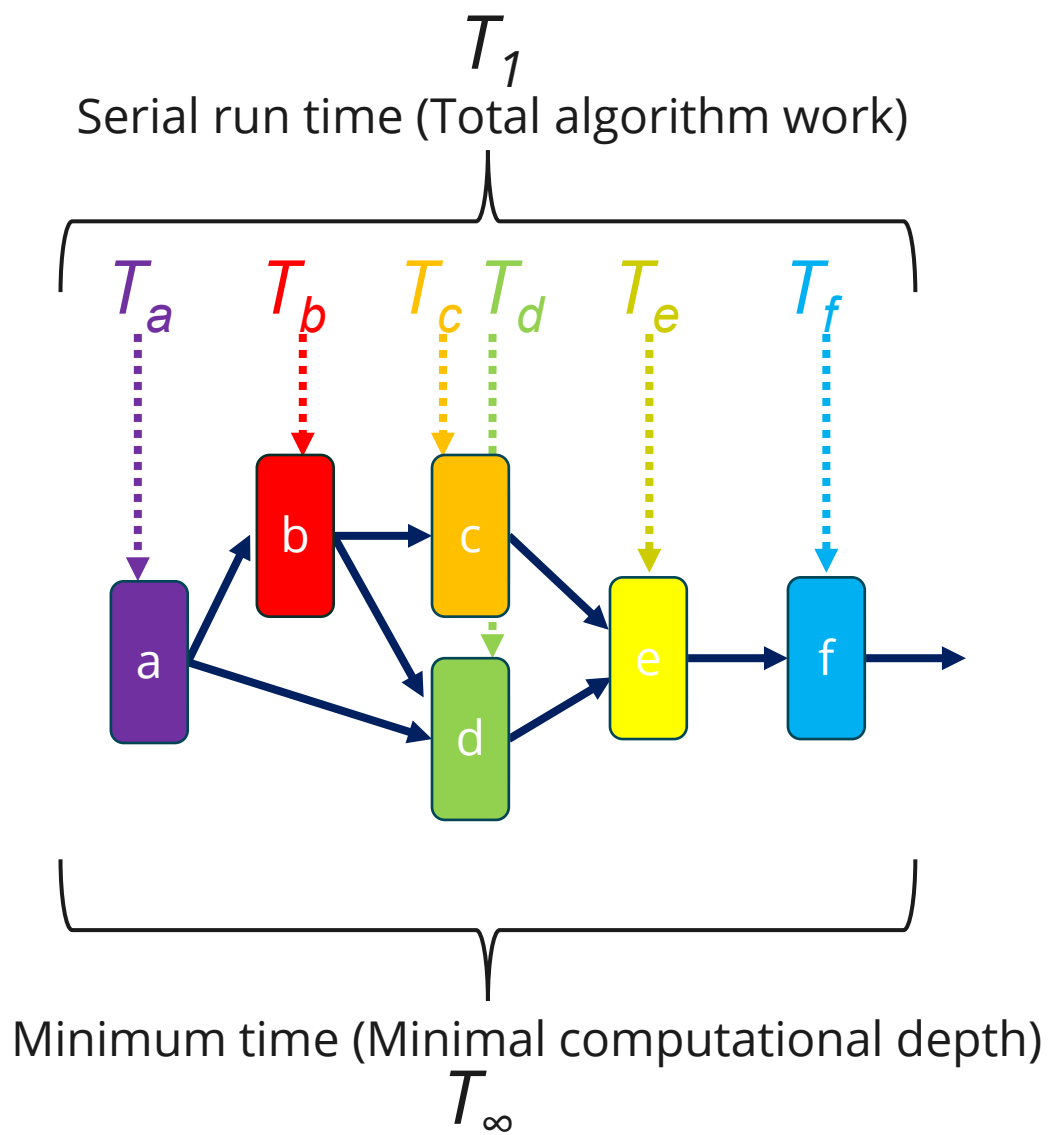


TABLE II  
TIME, SPACE, AND ENERGY SCALING OF NEUROMORPHIC AND  
CONVENTIONAL SYSTEMS

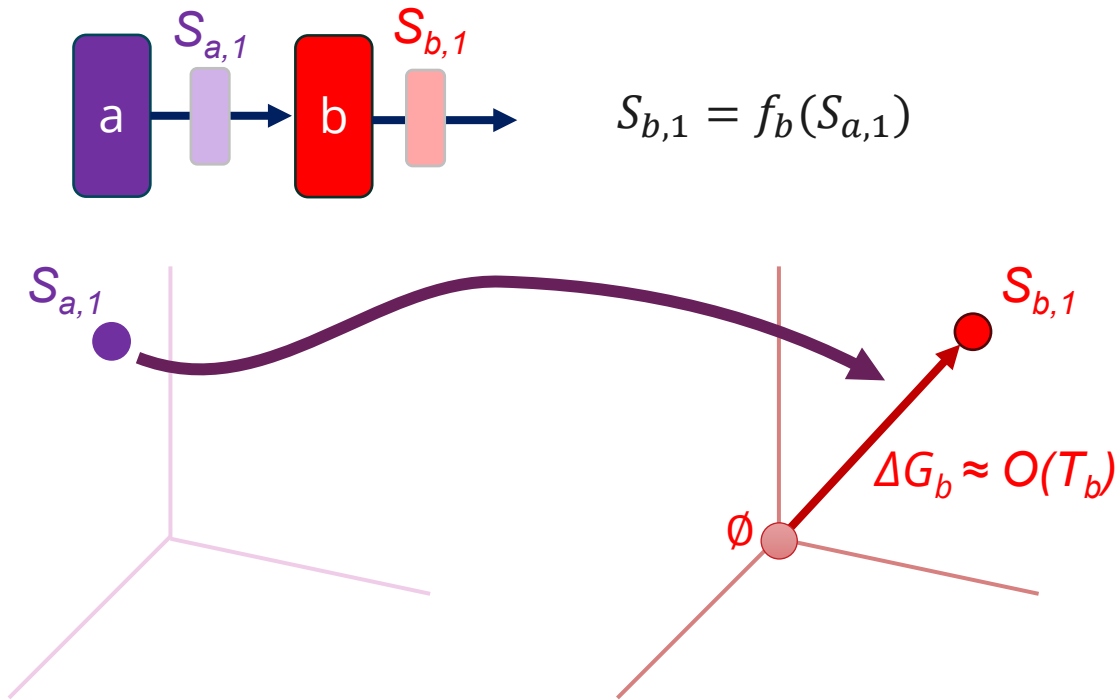
	Time ( $T$ )	Space ( $S$ )	Energy ( $E$ )
<b>Conventional</b>			
<i>Ideal</i>	$O\left(\frac{T_1}{p}\right)$	$O(p)$	$O(T_1)$
CPU (Realized)	$O(T_1)$	$O(1)$	$O(T_1)$
GPU (Realized)	$O\left(\frac{T_1}{p \times p_{efficiency}}\right)$	$O(p)$	$O(T_1)$
<b>Neuromorphic</b>			
<i>Ideal</i>	$O(T_{inf})$	$O(T_1)$	
Realized	$O(N_{core} T_{inf})$	$O(T_1 / N_{core})$	



# WHAT DOES EVENT-DRIVEN IMPLY?

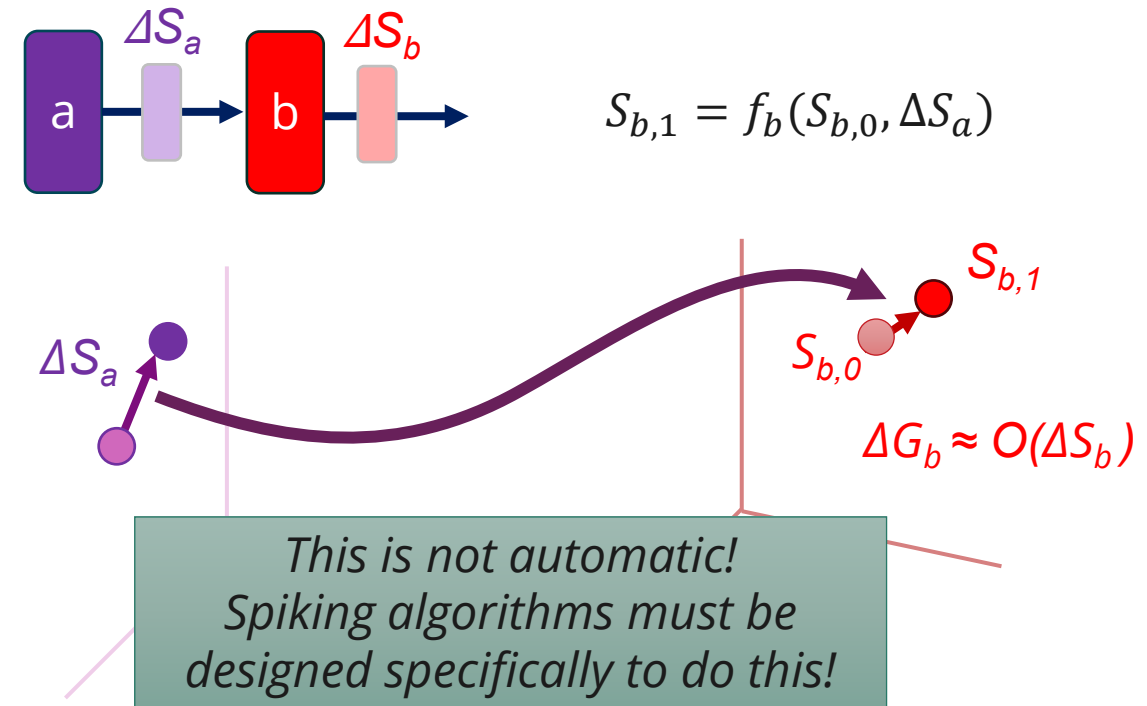
Because processors are shared, conventional algorithms must continually communicate algorithm states to and from memory.

This is why energy cost is relatively independent of what initial and end states are.



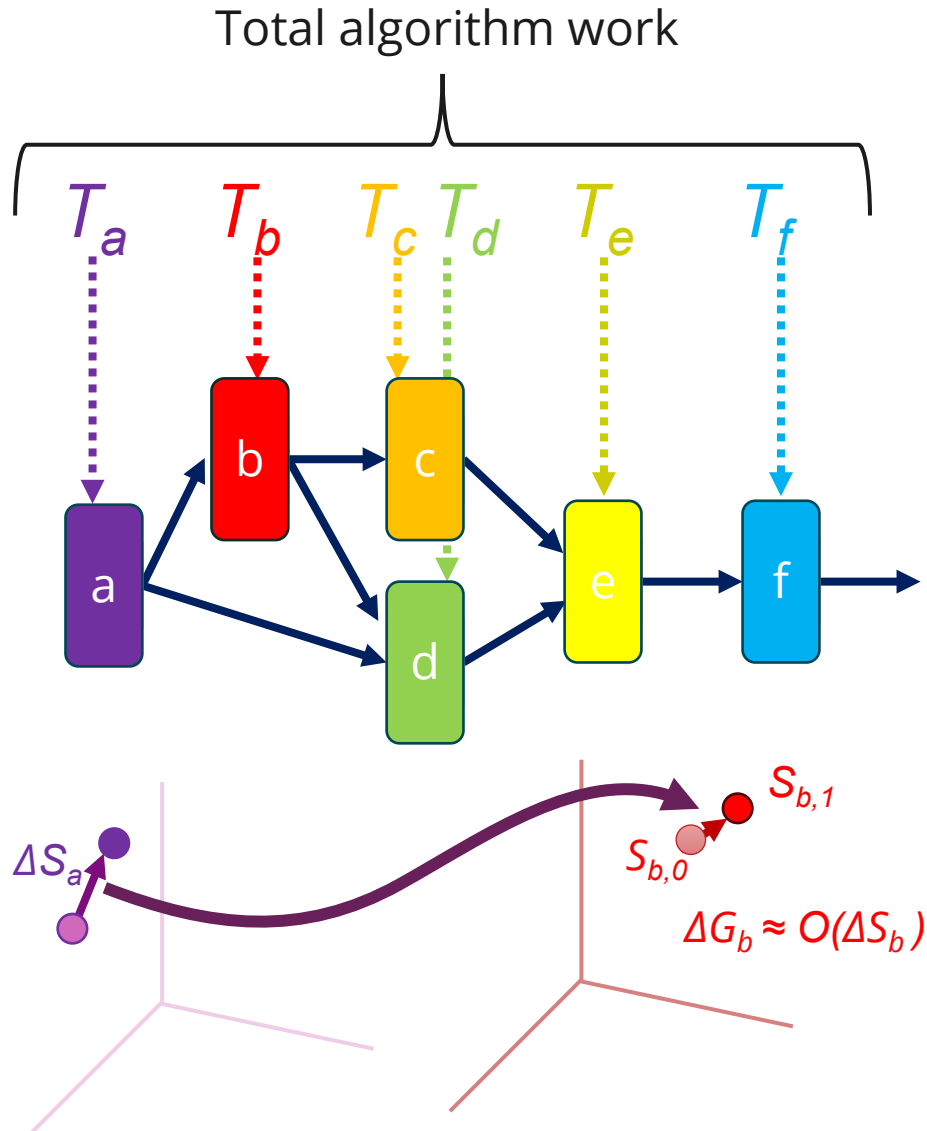
Neurons are event-driven, which means their state is only updated if necessary.

Neural algorithm communication should focus on how these states should be updated





# ENERGY OF NEUROMORPHIC SCALES WITH *CHANGE OF STATE*



Energy =  
Energy(operations) + **Energy(communication)**

## *Conventional*

- Energy costs are largely communication to and from memory
- Memory updates are largely state-independent

***Conventional energy scales with total work***

## *Neuromorphic*

- Energy costs are largely communication between compute elements
- Communication is event-driven. No energy expended if there is no change

***Neuromorphic energy scales with the change of state across computational graph***

- Upper bound is still total work
- Lower bound can be really low...



# ENERGY OF NEUROMORPHIC SCALES WITH *CHANGE OF STATE*

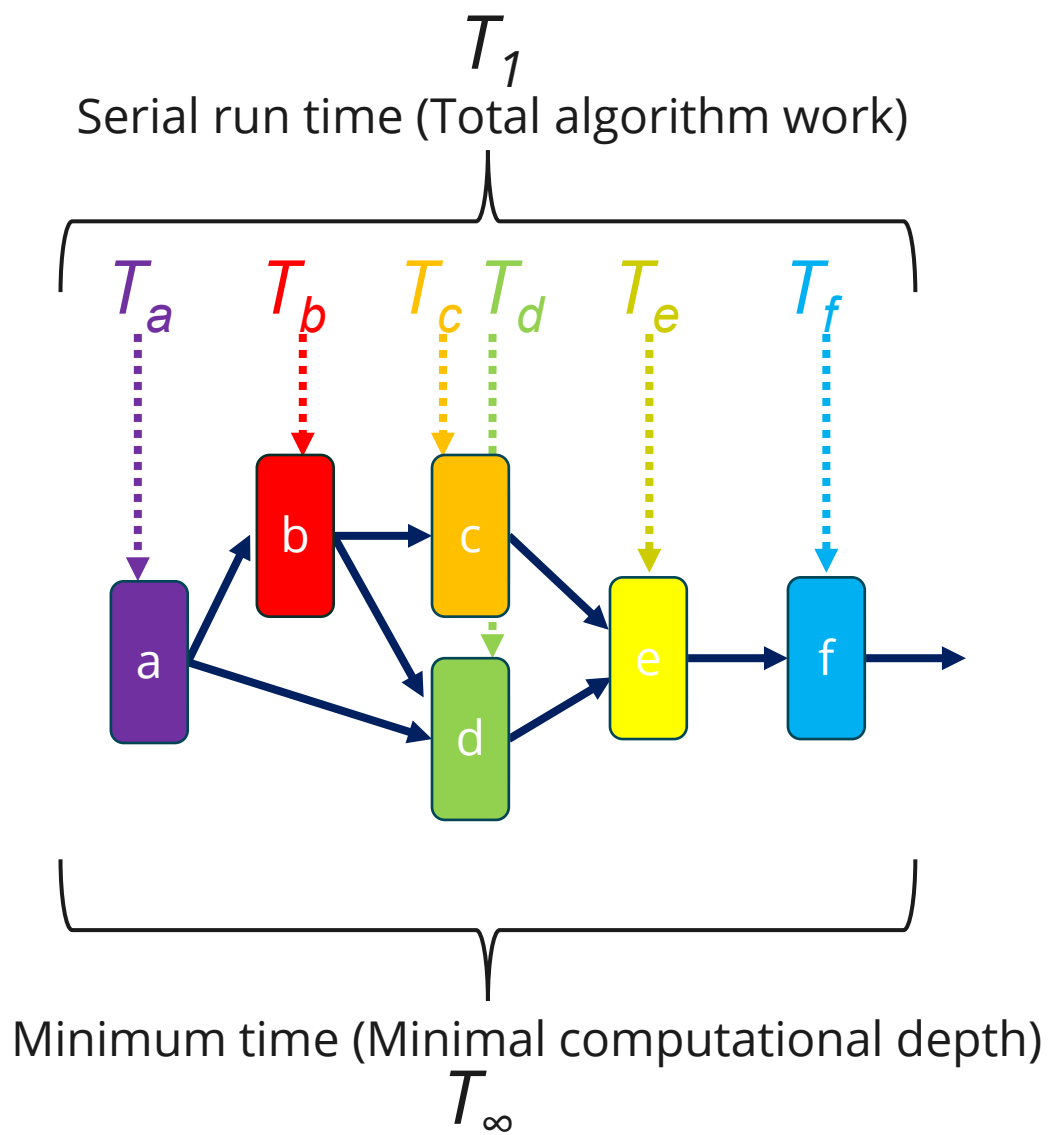
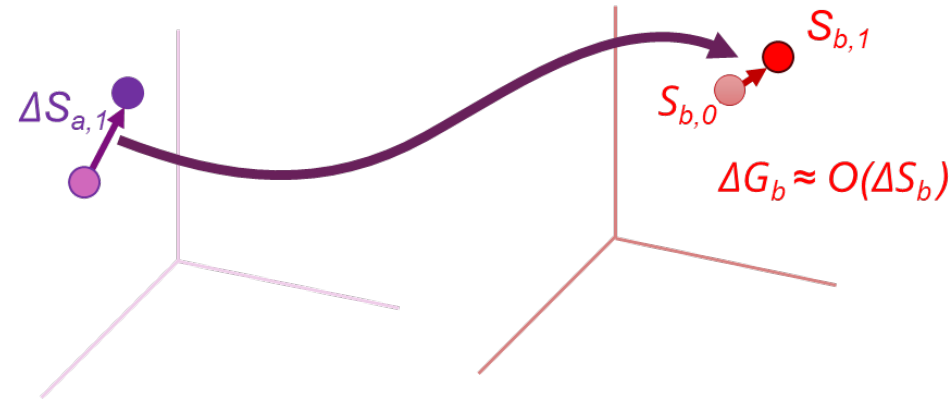


TABLE II  
TIME, SPACE, AND ENERGY SCALING OF NEUROMORPHIC AND  
CONVENTIONAL SYSTEMS

	Time ( $T$ )	Space ( $S$ )	Energy ( $E$ )
<b>Conventional</b>			
<i>Ideal</i>	$O\left(\frac{T_1}{p}\right)$	$O(p)$	$O(T_1)$
CPU (Realized)	$O(T_1)$	$O(1)$	$O(T_1)$
GPU (Realized)	$O\left(\frac{T_1}{p \times p_{efficiency}}\right)$	$O(p)$	$O(T_1)$
<b>Neuromorphic</b>			
<i>Ideal</i>	$O(T_{inf})$	$O(T_1)$	$O(\Delta G)$
Realized	$O(N_{core} T_{inf})$	$O(T_1 / N_{core})$	$O(\Delta G)$



# WHAT MAKES FOR A LOW $\Delta G$ ?



## Low $\Delta G$

- Algorithm state does not change much
- Path-dependent trajectories
- Does not change algorithmic work

### Promising candidates

- Sparse computations
- **Monte Carlo algorithms**
- **Iterative and recurrent algorithms**
- Optimization
- Online algorithms

## High $\Delta G$ ( $\Delta G \approx T_1$ )

- Algorithm state changes are extensive
- Algorithms “touch” most/all memory
- Equal to algorithm work if everything changes with each operation

### Example candidates

- Dense linear algebra
- Graphics rendering
- Modern AI algorithms (as formulated)
- Cryptography

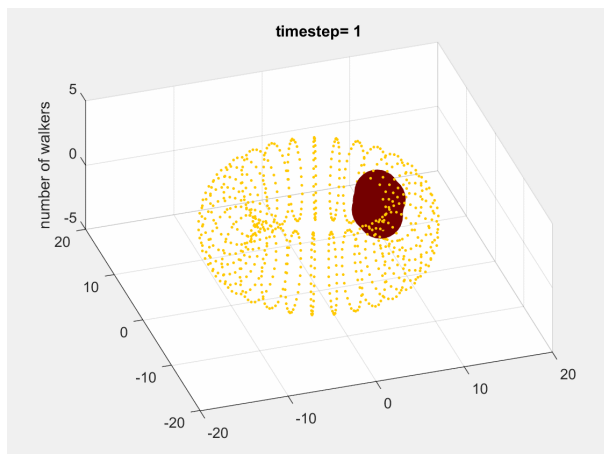




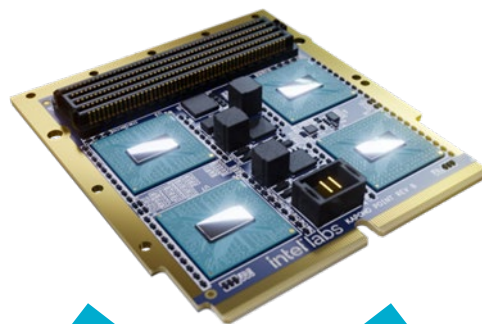
## PART 3:

HOW DOES NEUROMORPHIC IMPACT  
REAL COMPUTING APPLICATIONS?

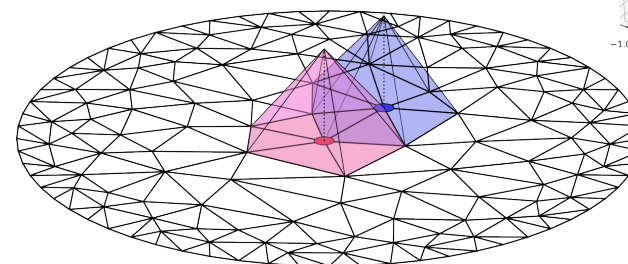
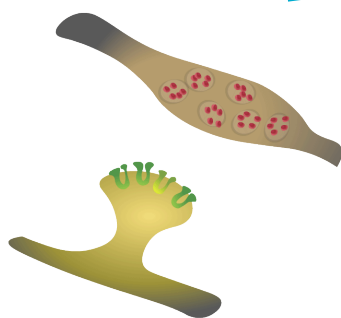
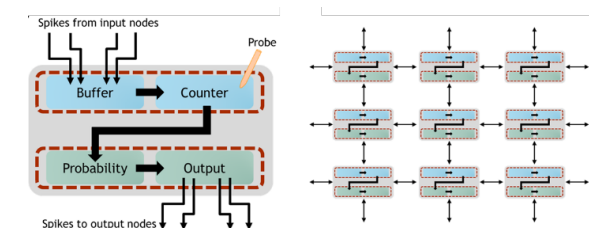
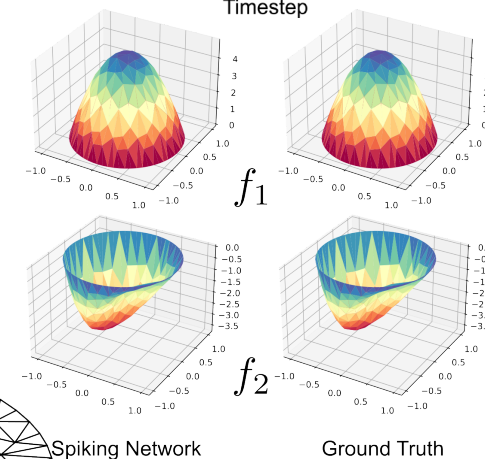
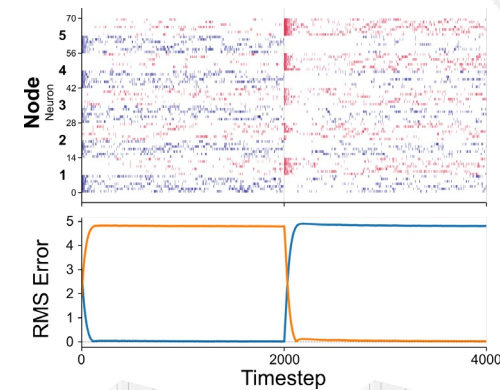




Neuromorphic hardware can *efficiently* solve stochastic Monte Carlo simulations



Neuromorphic hardware can *efficiently* solve finite element method simulations

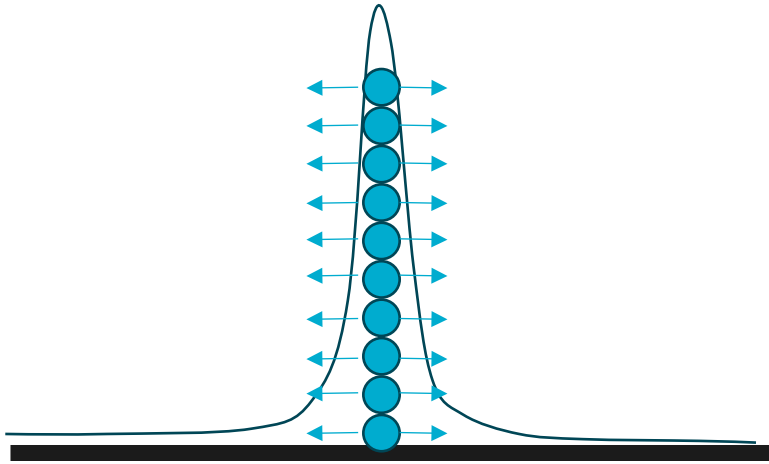




# CAN WE REFORMULATE MONTE CARLO FOR NEUROMORPHIC?



Initial State



$$dx_i/dt = f(x_i, X, \dots)$$

*K particles*



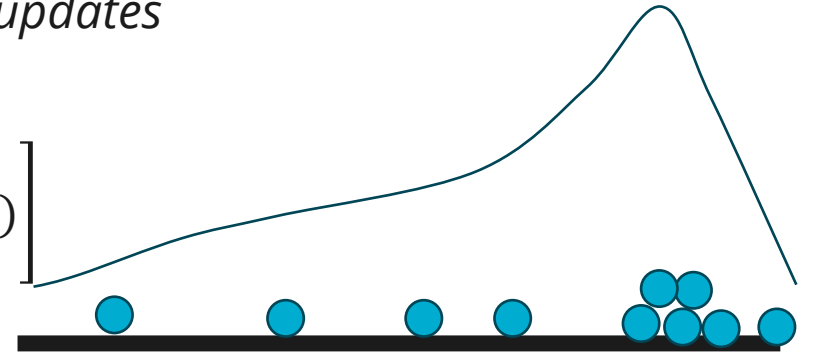
$$\left[ \begin{array}{c} \uparrow \\ x_i(t+1) \\ \downarrow \end{array} \right]$$

*K location-dependent updates*



$$= f\left(\left[ \begin{array}{c} \uparrow \\ x_i(t) \\ \downarrow \end{array} \right], X, \dots\right) + \left[ \begin{array}{c} \uparrow \\ x_i(t) \\ \downarrow \end{array} \right]$$

Final State



$$dm_i/dt = g_i(X, \dots)$$

*M locations*

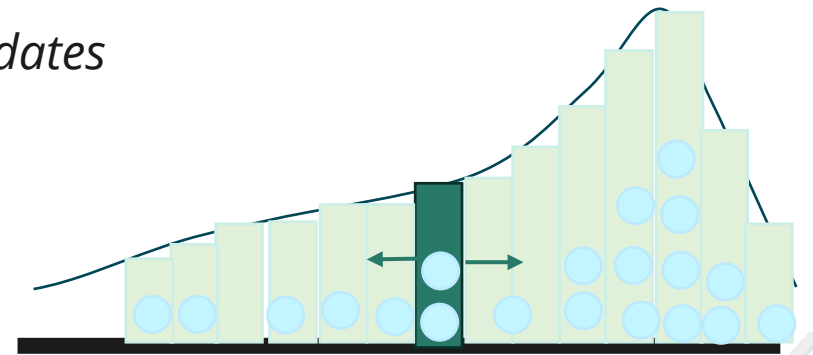
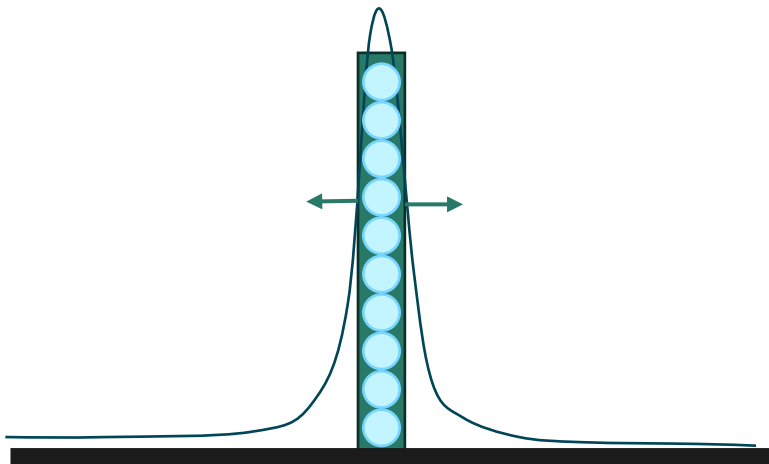


$$\left[ \begin{array}{c} \uparrow \\ m_i(t+1) \\ \downarrow \end{array} \right]$$

*M location-specific updates*

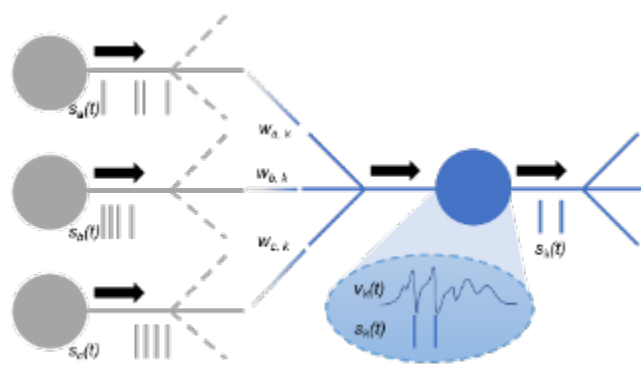


$$= g_i(X, \dots) + \left[ \begin{array}{c} \uparrow \\ m_i(t) \\ \downarrow \end{array} \right]$$

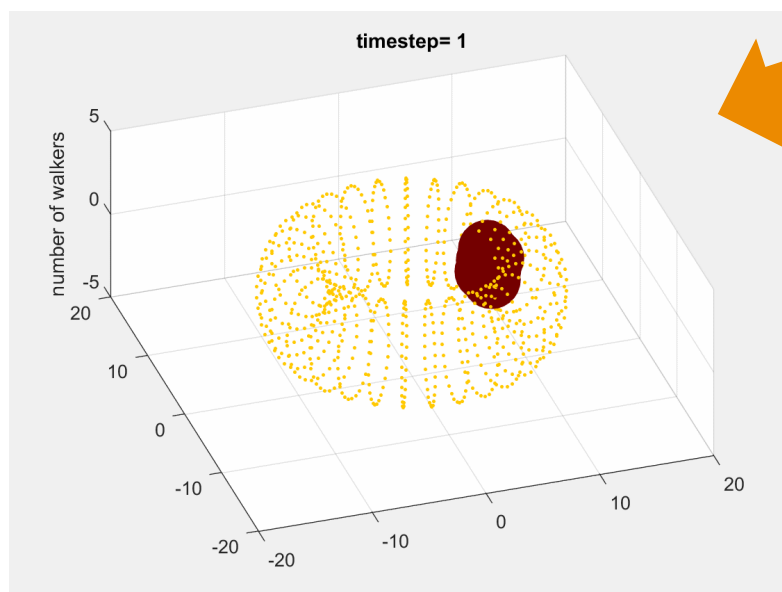
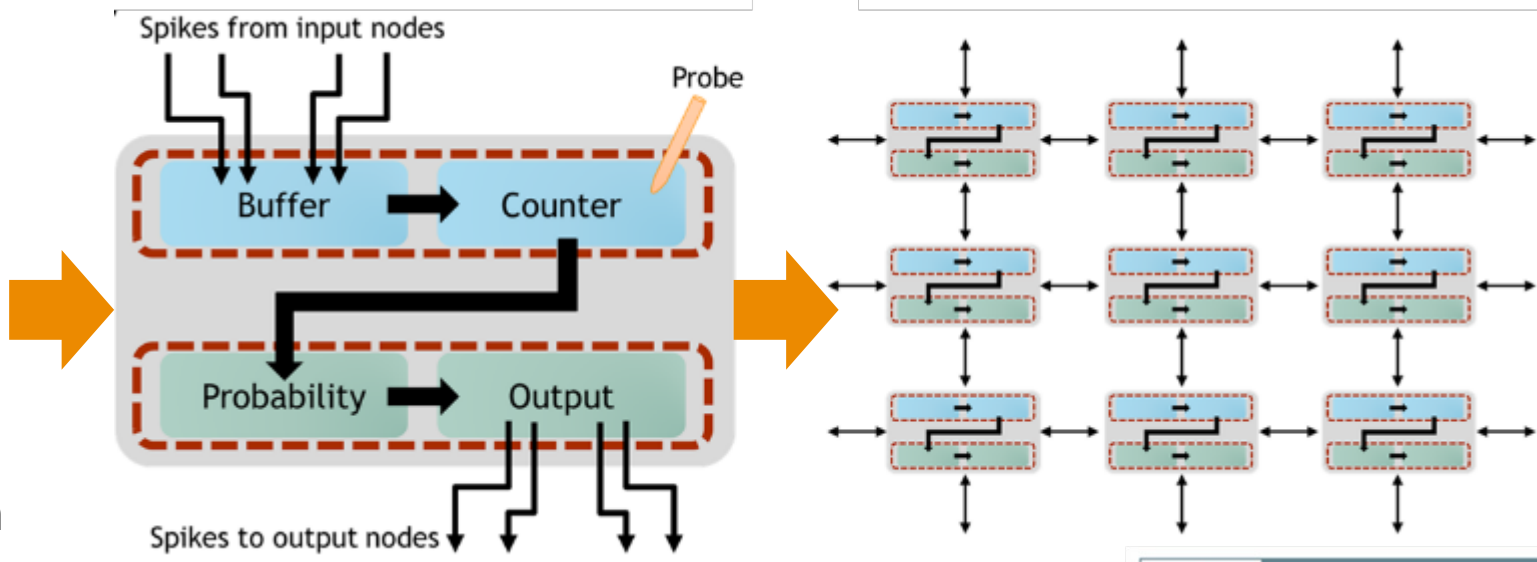




# USE NEURONS TO REPRESENT *STATE SPACE* OF MONTE CARLO AND USE SPIKES TO REPRESENT PARTICLES



Leaky integrate-and-fire neuron



nature  
electronics

ARTICLES  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41928-021-00705-7>

## Neuromorphic scaling advantages for energy-efficient random walk computations

J. Darby Smith, Aaron J. Hill, Leah E. Reeder, Brian C. Franke, Richard B. Lehoucq, Ojas Parekh, William Severa and James B. Almone

Neuromorphic computing, which aims to replicate the computational structure and architecture of the brain in synthetic hardware, has typically focused on artificial intelligence applications. What is less explored is whether such brain-inspired hardware can provide value beyond cognitive tasks. Here we show that the high degree of parallelism and configurability of spiking neuromorphic architectures makes them well suited to implement random walks via discrete-time Markov chains. These random walks are useful in Monte Carlo methods, which represent a fundamental computational tool for solving a wide range of numerical computing tasks. Using IBM's TrueNorth and Intel's Loihi neuromorphic computing platforms, we show that our neuromorphic computing algorithm for generating random walk approximations of diffusion offers advantages in energy-efficient computation compared with conventional approaches. We also show that our neuromorphic computing algorithm can be extended to more sophisticated jump-diffusion processes that are useful in a range of applications, including financial economics, particle physics and machine learning.

Despite the increasing ability to develop large-scale neural hardware, the theoretical value of neuromorphic hardware remains unclear—unlike quantum computing that offers clear fundamental advantages at scale. Nevertheless, there are several architectural features of most nervous systems that could yield advantages including the high degree of connectivity between neurons, the collocation of processing and memory, and the use of action potentials (referred to as spikes) to communicate<sup>1,2,3</sup>. Algorithm research for spiking neuromorphic hardware has primarily focused on its suitability for deep learning and other emerging artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms<sup>4,5</sup>. Such applications are straightforward, given the alignment of neural architectures with neural networks, and it can be expected that the value of neuromorphic computing will grow as AI algorithms derive further inspiration from the brain<sup>6,7</sup>. However, the impact of neuromorphic computing beyond cognitive applications is less certain.

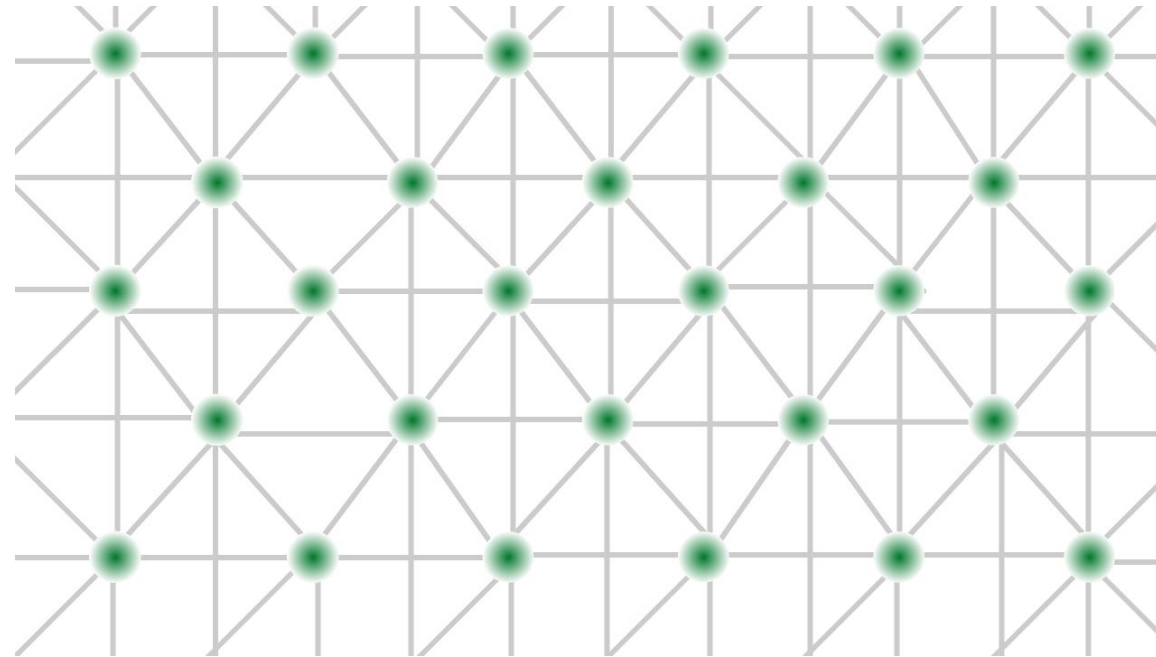
Quantum computing has shown how emerging hardware can have an impact beyond its original inspiration: it was conceived as a means for efficient chemistry simulations<sup>8,9</sup>, but is now recognised as useful in a much broader range of applications<sup>10,11</sup>. Unlike quantum computing, which faces technical challenges in scaling up<sup>12</sup>, time scaling compared with the von Neumann architecture and still requiring less total energy to perform the same computation.

Observing a neuromorphic advantage for non-cognitive applications should not be taken as a given since the specialisation of computer architectures to improve performance on a subset of tasks will likely result in degraded performance in other tasks<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, observing a neuromorphic advantage on non-cognitive applications would demonstrate that neuromorphic computing can have a broader impact than previously assumed and provide a concrete framework by which to develop the technology. Although a definitive neuromorphic advantage (as defined here) has not yet been demonstrated for non-cognitive applications, there are three categories of such computing tasks that appear well suited for neuromorphic computing: linear algebra, in which the high fan-in of neurons can be used to realise known theoretical advantages of threshold gate (TG) logic<sup>14,15</sup>; graph analytics tasks that can leverage the configurability and parallelisation of neural circuits<sup>16,17</sup>; and sampling steady-state distributions for a wide range of potential applications using stochastic neural circuits<sup>18,19</sup>.

In this Article, we show that large-scale neuromorphic hardware can offer a neuromorphic advantage on a fundamental



NEUROMORPHIC COMPUTING ADVANTAGE APPEARS TO BE WHEN AN ALGORITHM CAN SPLIT THE TASK ACROSS COMPUTATIONAL GRAPH WITH SPARSE COMMUNICATION

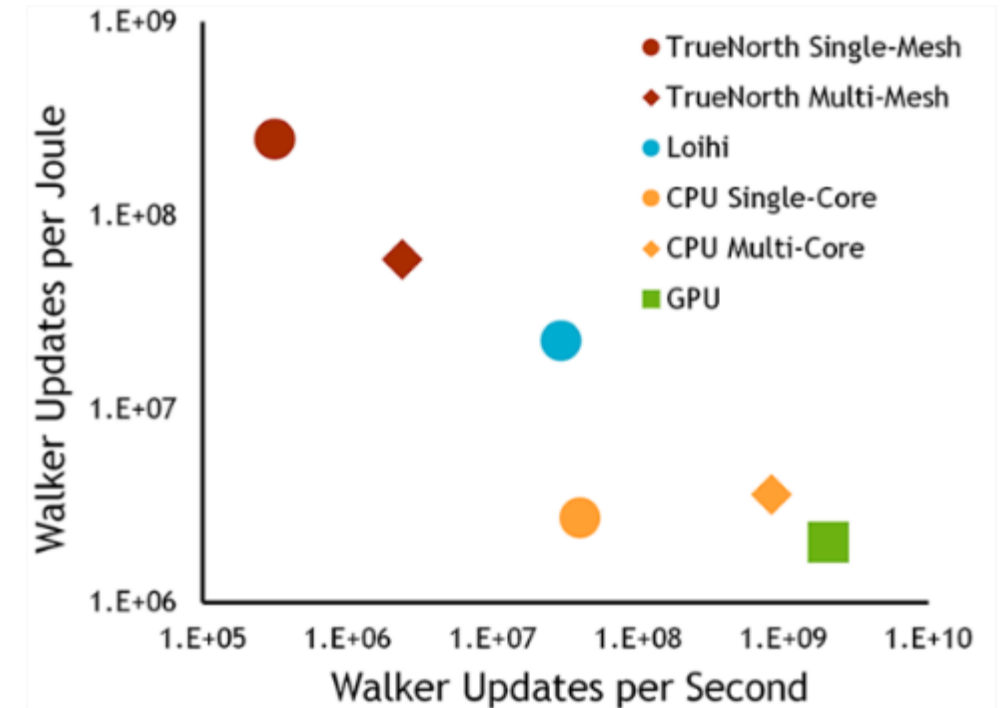
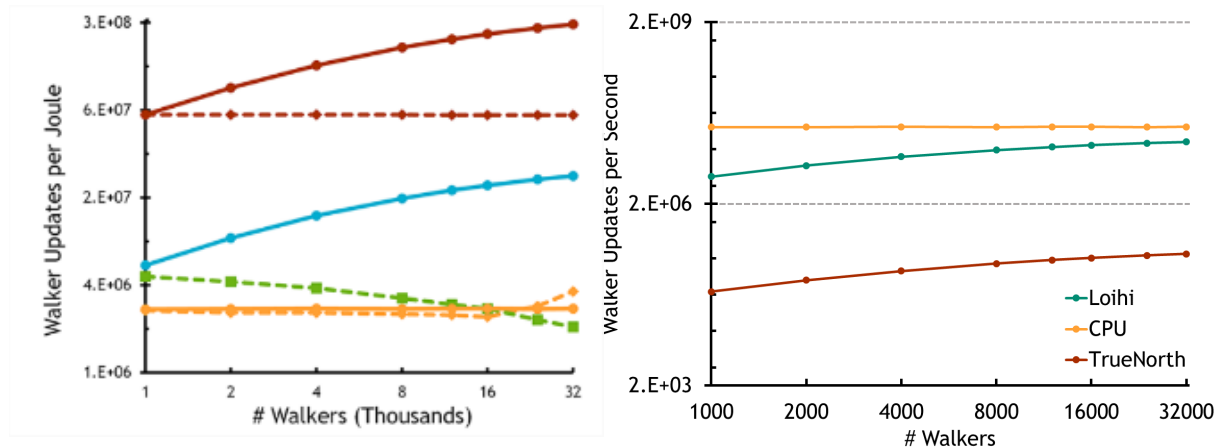




# WE CAN IDENTIFY A NEUROMORPHIC ADVANTAGE FOR SIMULATING RANDOM WALKS



We define a *neuromorphic advantage* as an algorithm that shows a demonstrable **advantage** in terms of one resource (e.g., energy) while exhibiting comparable **scaling** in other resources (e.g., time).





# WHAT PDES CAN NEURAL RANDOM WALKS ADDRESS?



**Class of Partial Integro-Differential Equations:**

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial}{\partial t} u(t, \mathbf{x}) = & \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i,j} (\mathbf{a}\mathbf{a}^\top)_{i,j}(t, \mathbf{x}) \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x_i \partial x_j} u(t, \mathbf{x}) + \sum_i b_i(t, \mathbf{x}) \frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} u(t, \mathbf{x}) \\ & + \lambda(t, \mathbf{x}) \int \left( u(t, \mathbf{x} + \mathbf{h}(t, \mathbf{x}, q)) - u(t, \mathbf{x}) \right) \phi_Q(q; t, \mathbf{x}) dq \\ & + c(t, \mathbf{x}) u(t, \mathbf{x}) + f(t, \mathbf{x}), \quad \mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{R}^d, t \in [0, \infty). \end{aligned}$$

**Stochastic Process:**

$$d\mathbf{X}(t) = \mathbf{b}(t, \mathbf{X}(t))dt + \mathbf{a}(t, \mathbf{X}(t))d\mathbf{W}(t) + \mathbf{h}(t, \mathbf{X}(t), q)dP(t; Q, \mathbf{X}(t)).$$

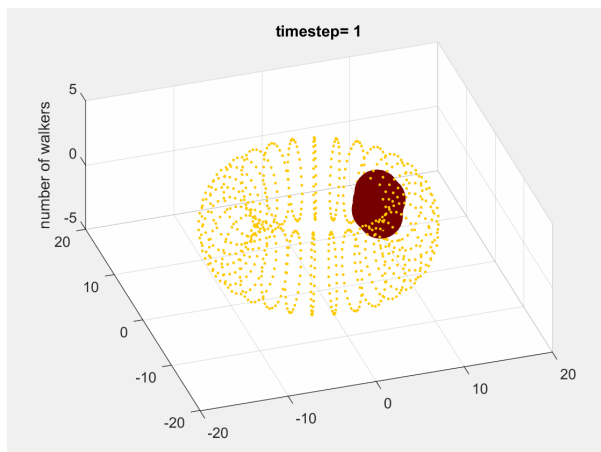
NMC Hardware Simulates This Stochastic Process

**Solution to initial value problem ( $u(0, \mathbf{x}) = g(\mathbf{x})$ ):**

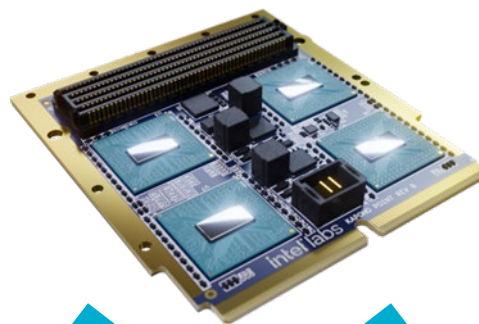
$$u(t, \mathbf{x}) = \mathbb{E} \left[ g(\mathbf{X}(t)) \exp \left( \int_0^t c(s, \mathbf{X}(s)) ds \right) + \int_0^t f(s, \mathbf{X}(s)) \exp \left( \int_0^s c(\ell, \mathbf{X}(\ell)) d\ell \right) ds \middle| \mathbf{X}(0) = \mathbf{x} \right].$$

Monte Carlo Approximates This Expectation

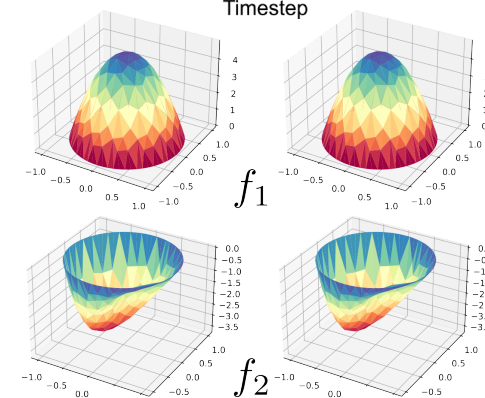
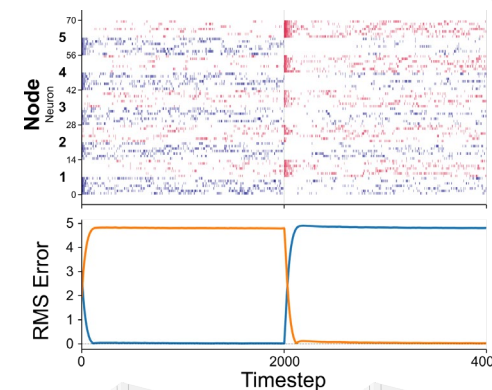




Neuromorphic hardware can *efficiently* solve stochastic Monte Carlo simulations



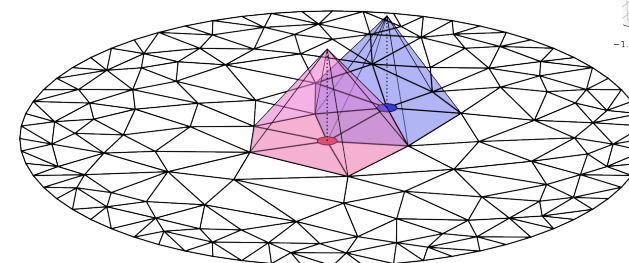
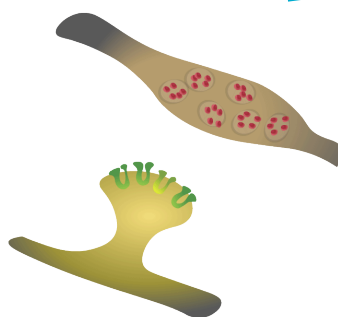
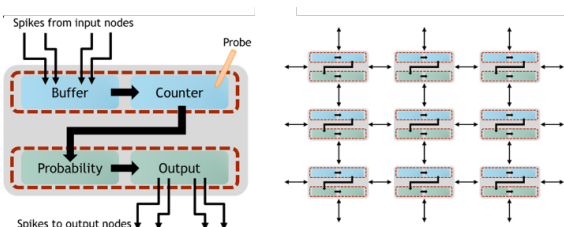
Neuromorphic hardware can *efficiently* solve finite element method simulations



Spiking Network

Ground Truth

*Theilman and Aimone, in press 2025*



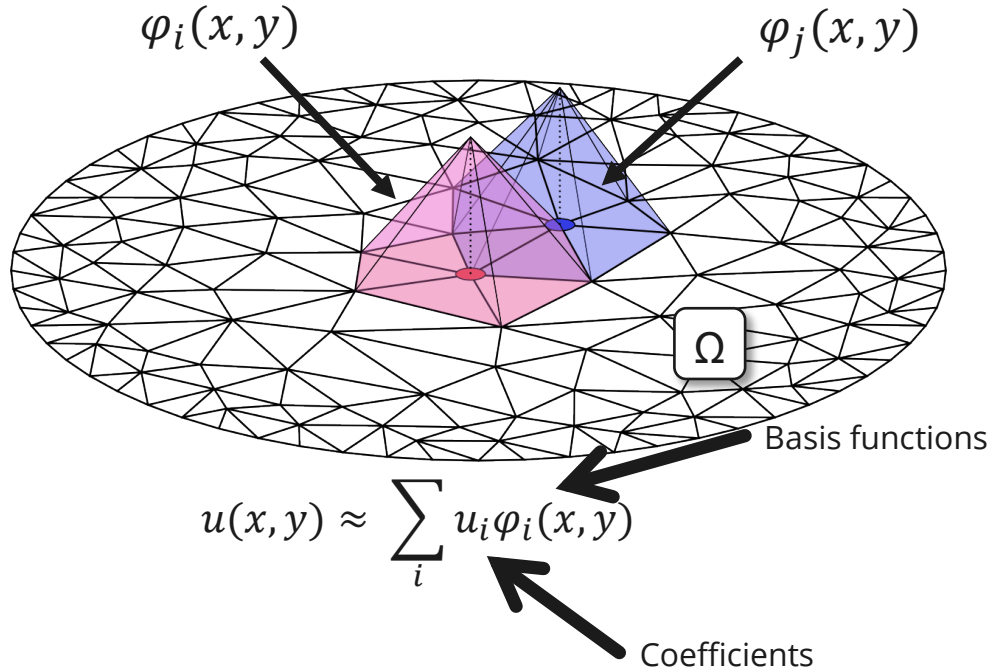


# CAN WE TACKLE FEM WITH PROBABILISTIC NEURAL HARDWARE?



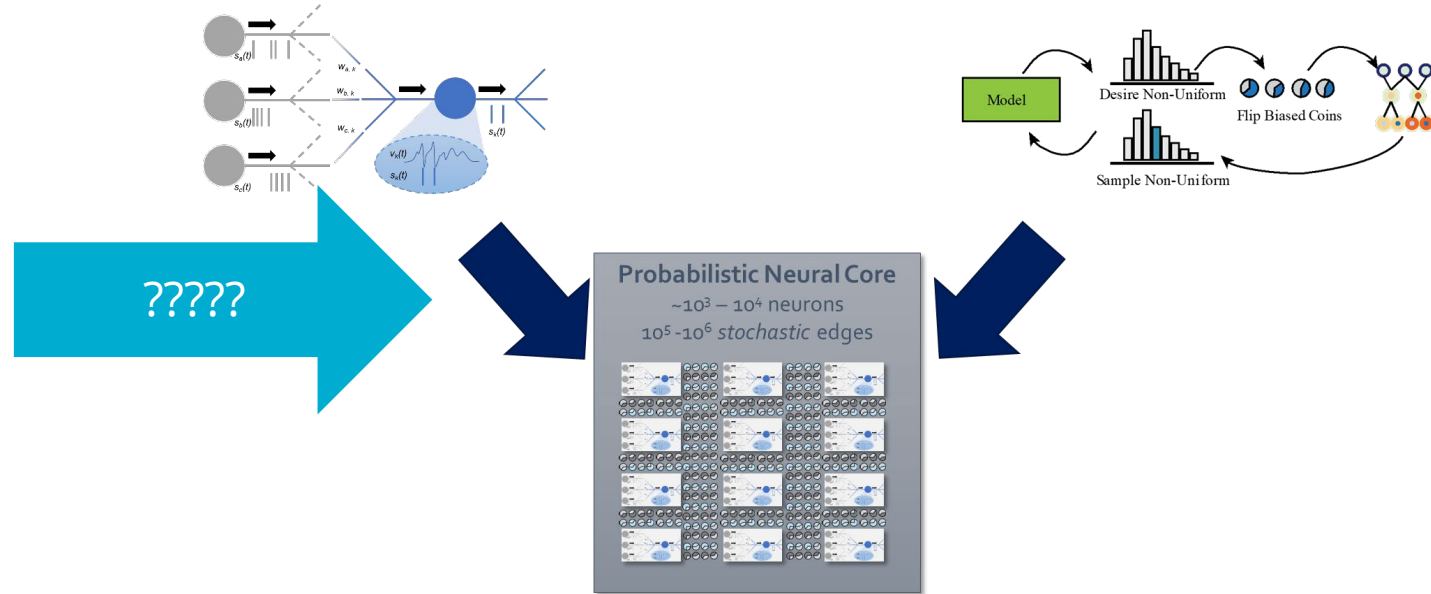
$$\nabla^2 u = f$$

Finite Element Methods – Gold Standard but expensive



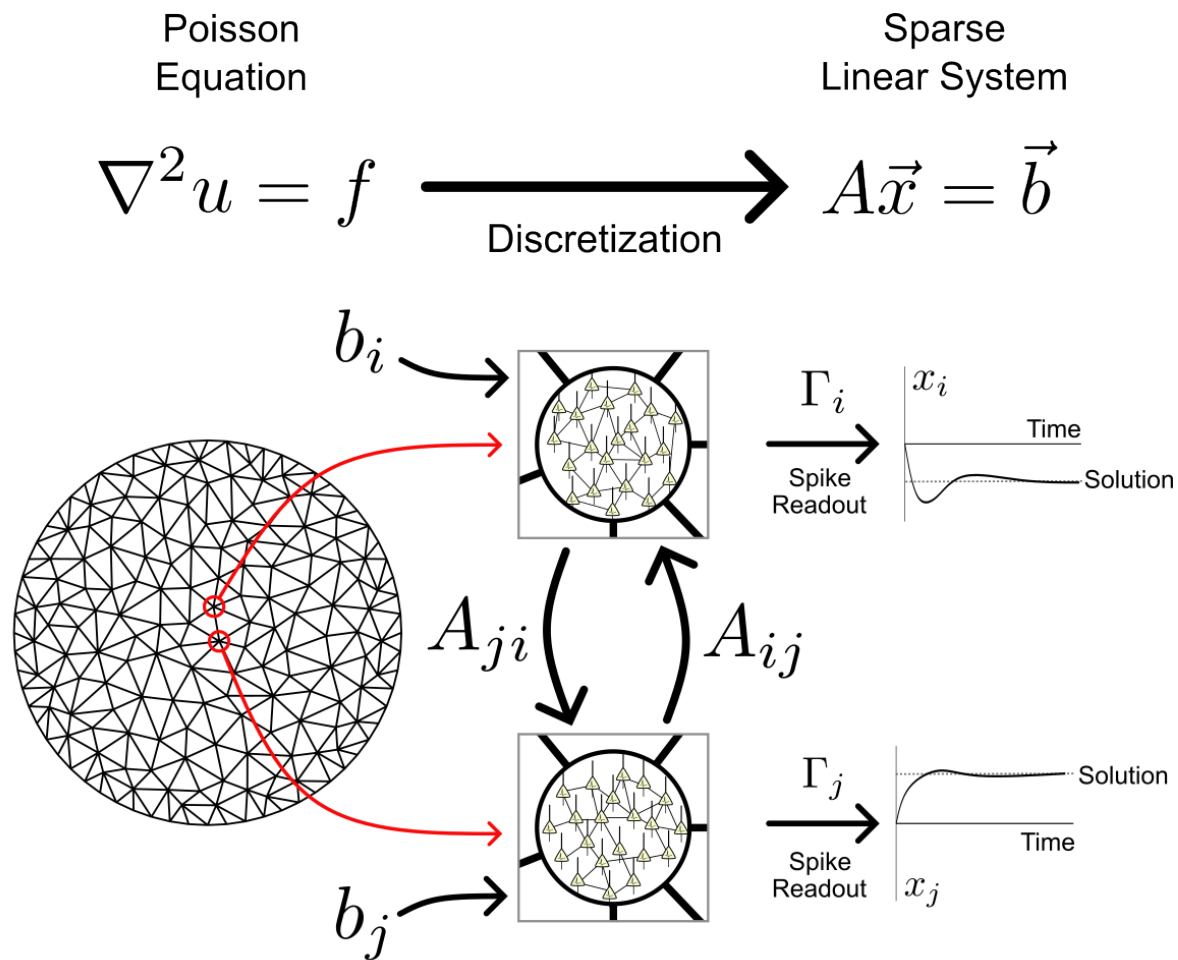
Sparse, linear system

$$A\vec{u} = \vec{b}$$



**NEUROMORPHIC FINITE ELEMENT METHODS?**

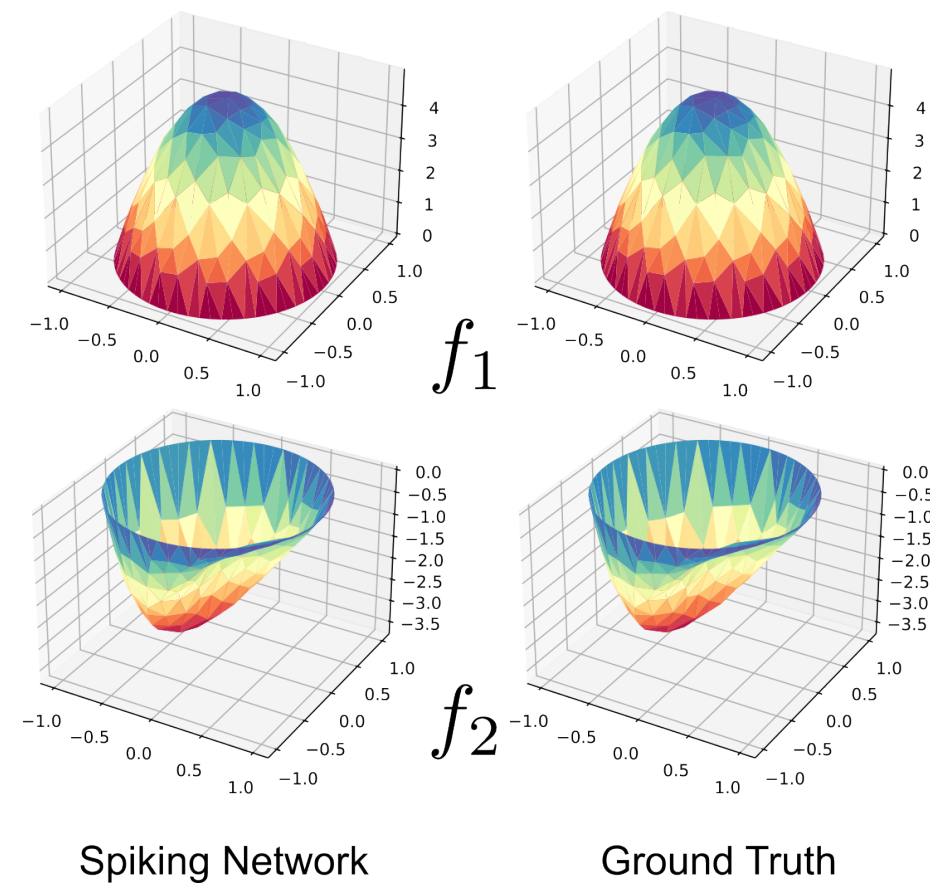
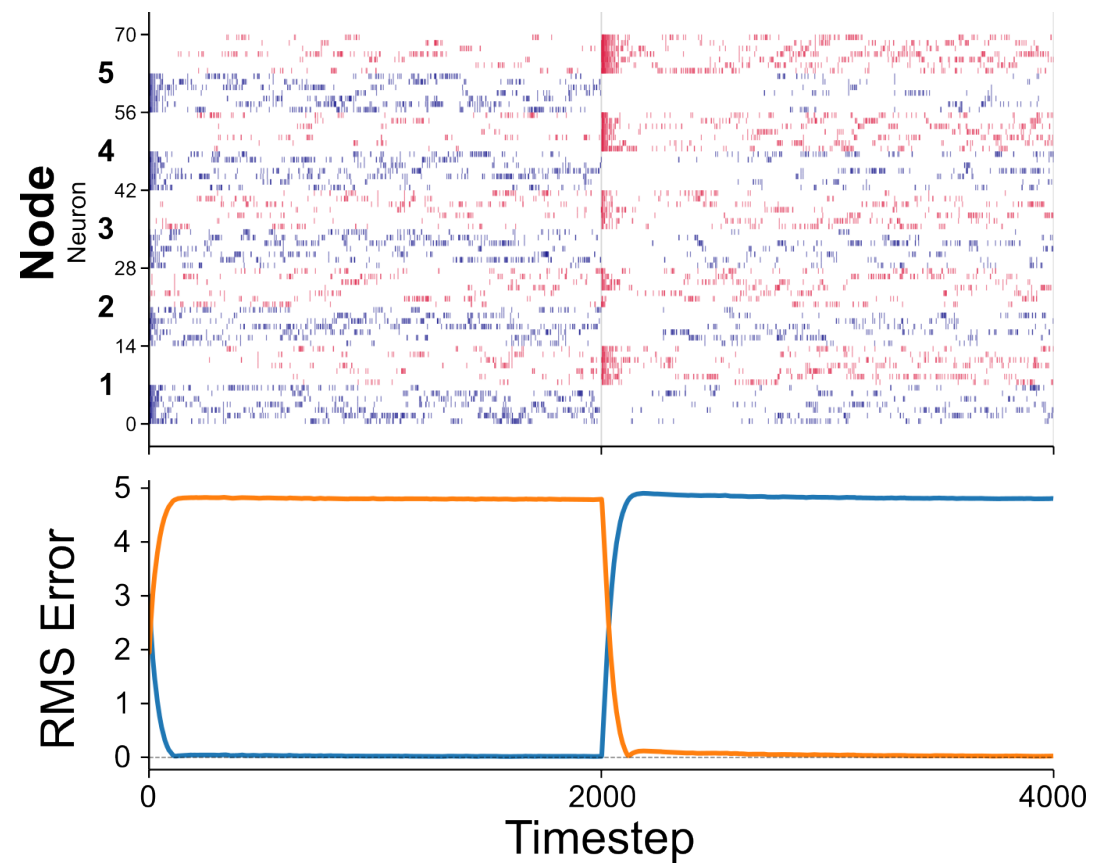




## Neuromorphic virtues:

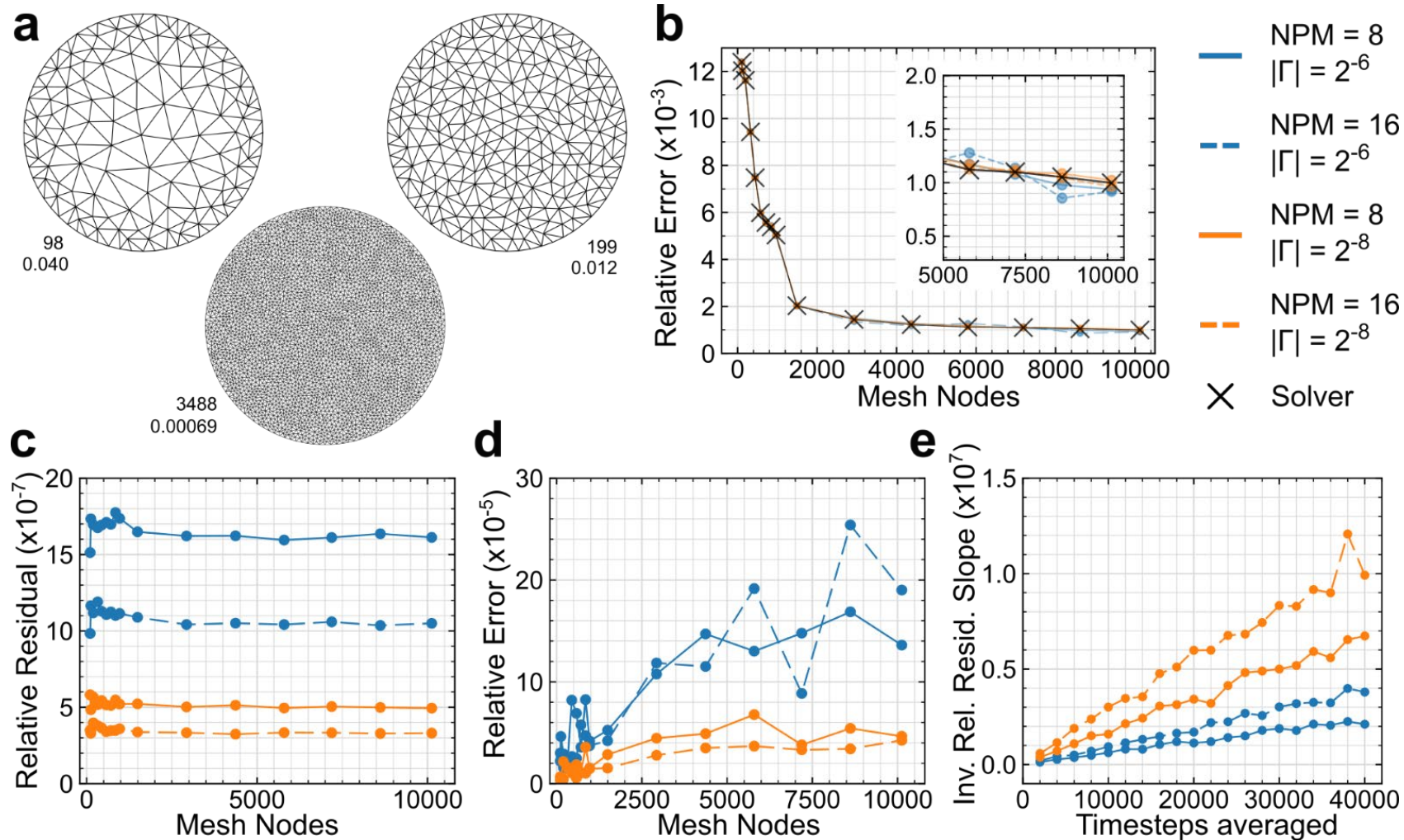
- Locally dense, globally sparse connectivity
- Scalable: neighbors  $\sim O(1)$
- Sparse spiking activity







# NEUROFEM PROVIDES SOLVER-QUALITY SOLUTIONS

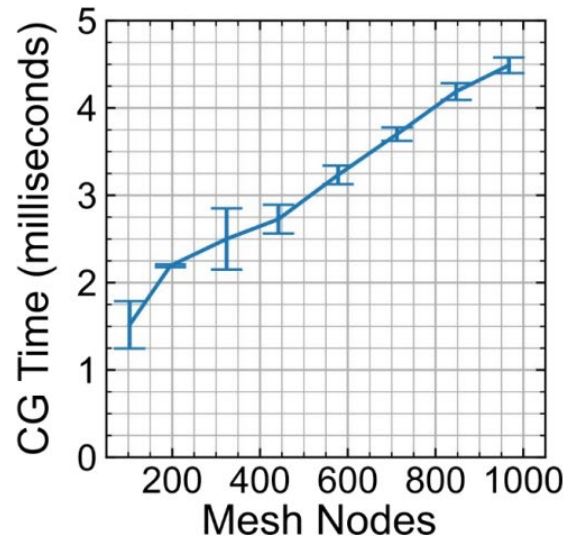
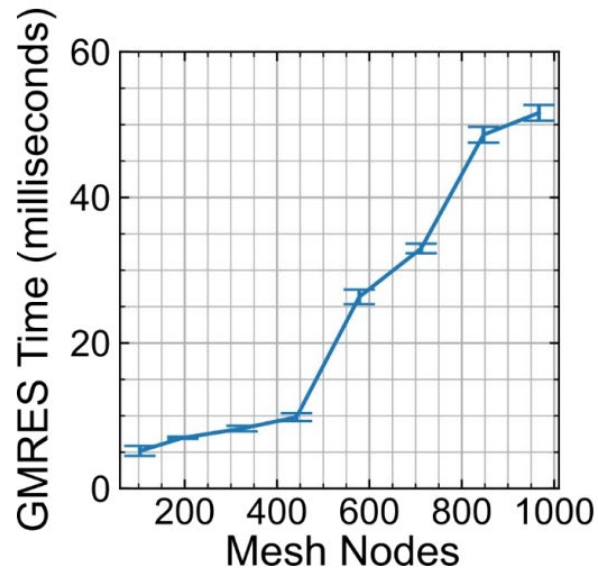




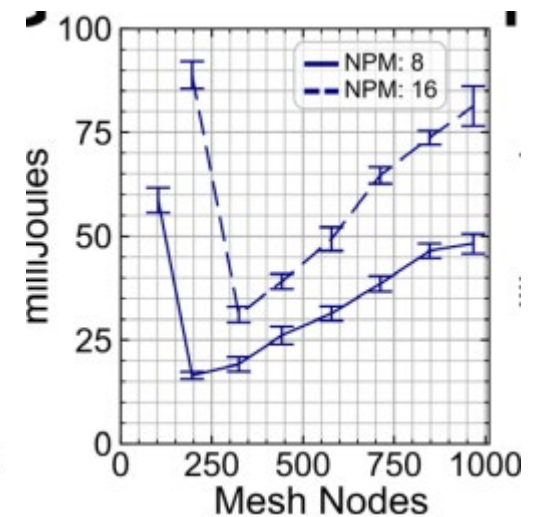
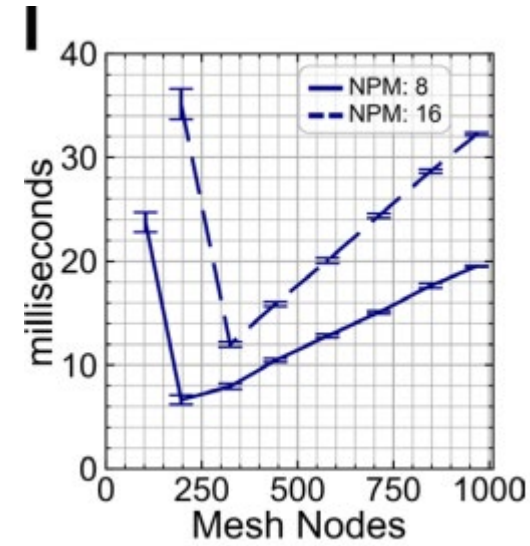
# NEUROFEM IS SIMILAR IN SPEED TO GMRES AND CONJUGATE GRADIENT



Neuromorphic solution is general



Conjugate gradient is faster at small scales, but can only be used for symmetric matrices





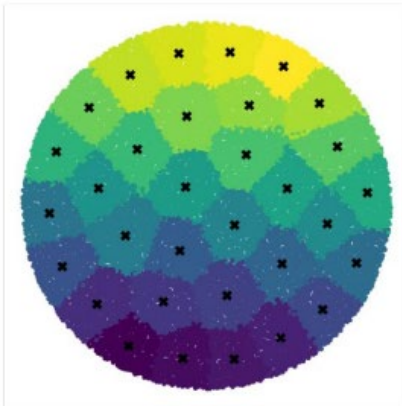
# NEUROFEM SHOWS COMPELLING STRONG AND WEAK SCALING



## Strong Scaling

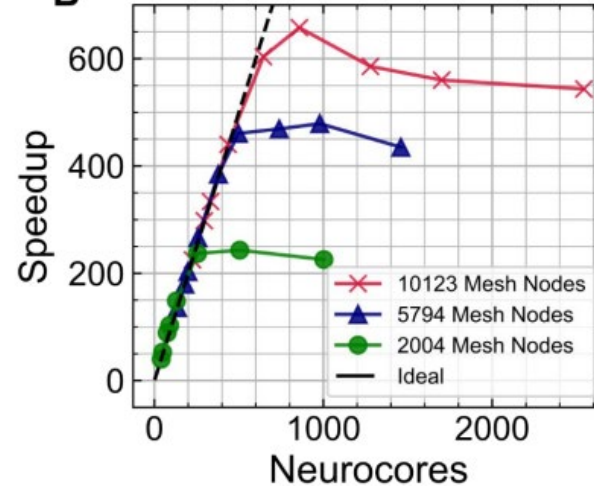
## Weak Scaling

A

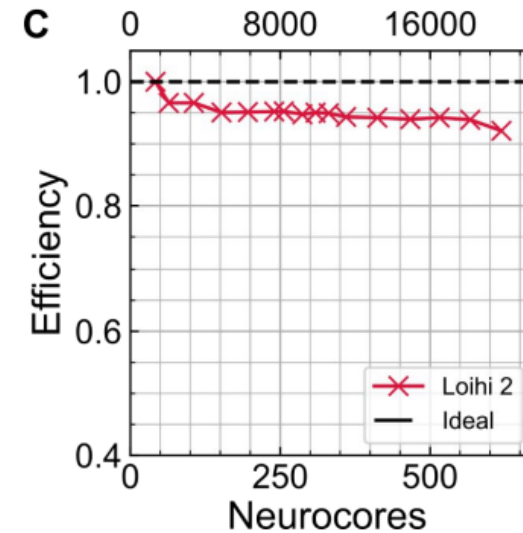


Mesh Nodes

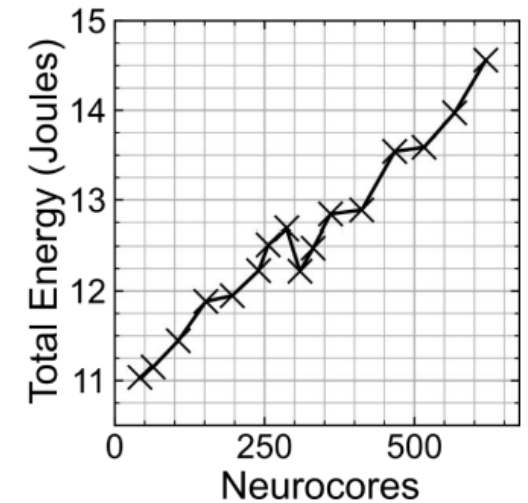
B



C

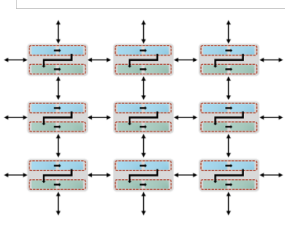
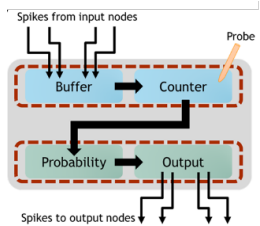


D

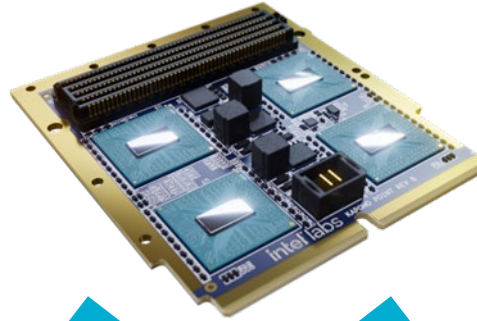




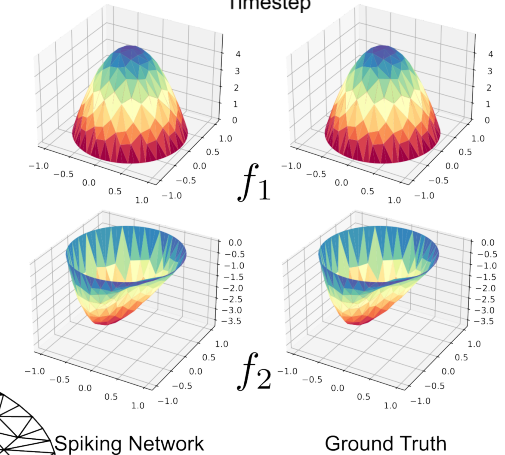
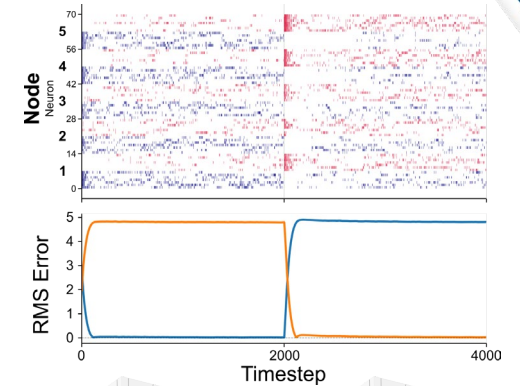
# LOW-POWER SCIENTIFIC COMPUTING ON NEUROMORPHIC



Neuromorphic hardware can *efficiently* solve stochastic Monte Carlo simulations



Neuromorphic hardware can *efficiently* solve finite element method simulations



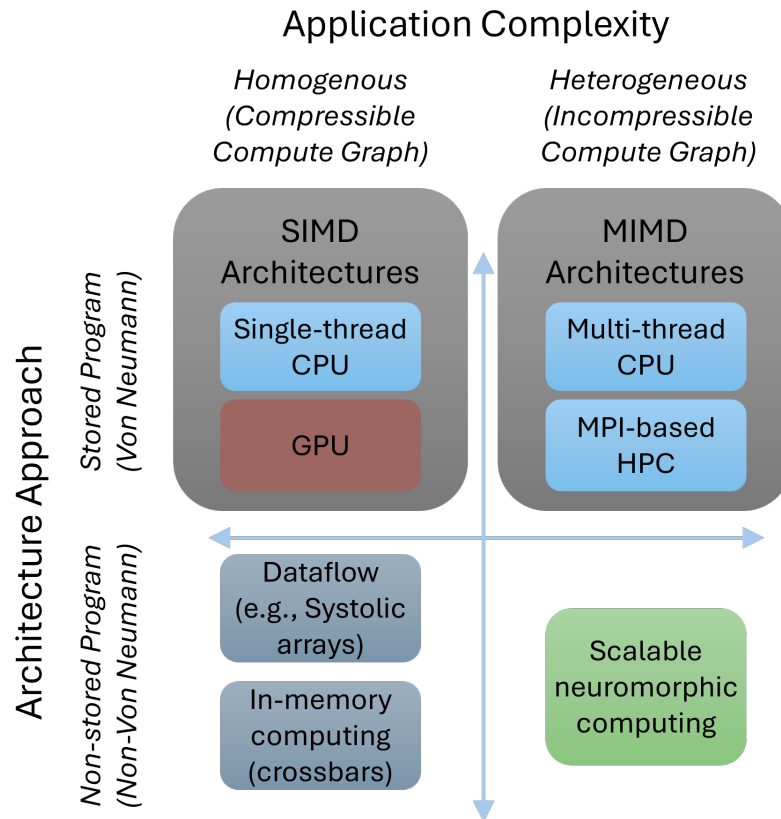
*Theilman and Aimone, in press 2025*

*Both probabilistic and sparse methods are emerging frontiers in AI algorithms!*

Severa et al., IJCNN 2018  
Smith et al., ICONS 2020  
Aimone et al., ICRC 2021  
Smith et al., Nature Electronics, 2021



# WE NEED MOD SIM TO DETERMINE HOW NEUROMORPHIC FITS INTO FUTURE HPC SYSTEMS



- Neuromorphic Computing offers distinct advantages *complementary* to existing accelerators and processors
- Effectively free from an energy and power perspective when suitably used
- *Back to basics* – this only makes sense if algorithms are co-designed to leverage neuromorphic advantages
- A path to energy-efficient AI?



# THANK YOU!



*Any questions to [jbaimon@sandia.gov](mailto:jbaimon@sandia.gov)*



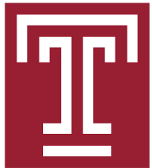
**Neural Exploration & Research Lab**  
COGNITIVE & EMERGING COMPUTING

Craig M Vineyard, Suma G Cardwell, Corinne M Teeter, William Severa, **J Darby Smith**, Felix Wang, Fred Rothganger, Michael Krygier, Cale Crowder, **Bradley H Theilman**, William Chapman, Ryan Dellana, Mark Plagge, Efrain Gonzalez, Srideep Musuvathy

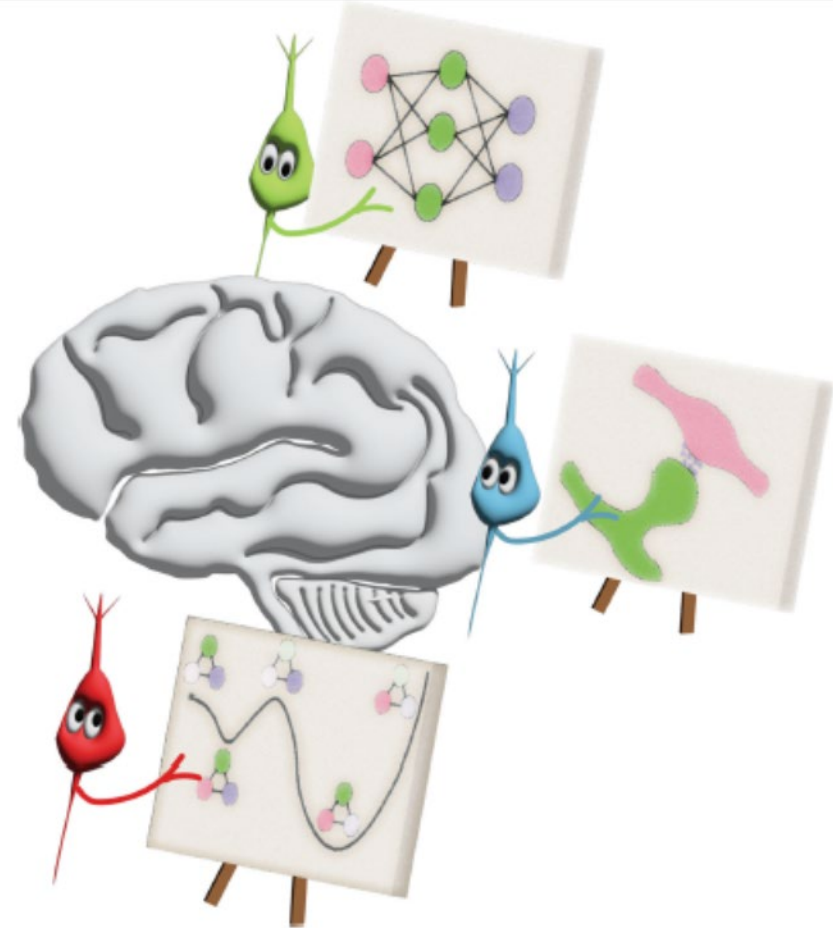
Aaron Hill, Shashank Misra, Yang Ho, Brady Taylor, Chris Allemang, Rich Lehoucq, Brian Franke, Ojas Parekh



UC San Diego



UTSA



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
**ENERGY**

Office of  
Science



LABORATORY DIRECTED  
RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

