Crafting an Enticing Undergraduate-Scale Research Synopsis

Your research synopsis is your advertisement to find the right student to work with. You should be straightforward and honest about the kind of work involved while giving enough context to make it compelling. Remember, your goal is to find someone who is interested in the project and able to do the work involved, not to sell your research in the same way you would write a funding proposal. Keep it relatively short – 200-250 words should suffice. In that limited space, try to answer the following questions:

• What is the "big picture" issue you are trying to address, question you are trying to answer, or hypothesis you are trying to test?
• What aspect of the big picture is this research project focused on?
• What kind of results do you expect, or what do you hope to find?
• What methods do you use? Where and how do you conduct your work? In other words, what exactly will the student be doing every day?
• What kinds of academic background, technical skills, and other qualifications does a student need to have to work with you?
• How much of a time commitment does the project require? Are you looking for someone for a quarter, a summer, a year? Are there opportunities to continue the work if the student is interested?

Questions you should be prepared to answer in a discussion with a prospective student, but may not fit in a written synopsis:

• What are the disciplines, fields of study, or intellectual foundations on which you are building your work?
• Why does this inspire and motivate you?
• Why would the average person on the street (i.e. a student) care?
• What impact do you want your work to have? (beyond getting you a PhD or publication!)
• Whom do you want to influence – policy makers, human behaviors, community decision makers, investors, or academics – and what change do you want to see?

Be sure to include all important logistical information as well:

• Give your project a succinct and accurate title
• Your name and contact information, and the best way to get in touch with you
• Your faculty advisor, and the name of the lab/project/etc. if applicable

To see examples (of varying quality), you might wish to visit the archives of past project proposals: [https://earth.stanford.edu/project-archive](https://earth.stanford.edu/project-archive)