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### Project Abstract (150 words)

The Studio Lab for Undergraduate Research in the College of Arts & Sciences solicits applications from mentors (tenure track faculty, instructors, teaching faculty, and Ph.D. students nominated by their advisors) and from undergraduate students. We pair undergraduates with mentor-led projects and pay students to work with their mentor for about 5 hours a week during the semester. We are applying for funds to conduct a program evaluation based on a randomized experiment in which we can track the progress of students who are admitted to Studio Lab and those who apply but are not admitted to Studio Lab. This will provide unique insight into whether and how programs like Studio Lab are advancing their goals in the areas of justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion, skill acquisition, retention, graduation rates, and even job placement.

### Project Summary

Along with my collaborator (Abigail Dym, University of

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skill

influences students' academic performance, retention in college, graduation rates, applications for outside internships, and ultimately securing employment after college. Studio Lab is an innovative way to promote experiential learning by facilitating connections between undergraduate students and mentors (tenure-track faculty, instructors, full-time researchers, and occasionally Ph.D. candidates) at the University of Colorado Boulder. This is truly a new kind of program for a large research university. Preliminary observations about the lab have been published in

students who are in their first 2 years of undergraduate education although undergraduates at all stages are welcome to apply. Potential mentors apply separately proposing a project on which students can work. We admit students and projects, pair students with mentor-led projects, and pay students to work with their mentors. Studio Lab also holds professionalization and social events, and a big end of year poster extravaganza at which students and mentors highlight their work in Studio Lab.

I am working with Abigail Dym, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, to use a randomized experiment to evaluate the effectiveness of the Studio Lab program. We propose to track 200 students who apply in April 2024 for 4 years. We will have a committee rank applicants. Students' applications will be ranked "1" (definitely admit), "2" (maybe admit), and "3" (do not admit). We will average the committee member rankings for each student. Of those students who receive an average score less than a set cut-off (likely 2.5), we will randomize their admission into the program. We are aiming to get at least 200

applicants in spring 2024. Past rounds of applications have resulted in more than 100 applicants. With additional publicizing, we are optimistic that we can get up to 200 applicants. The randomized admissions will allow us to track the students who were admitted and the students who were not admitted for at least 5 years. The 5-year time frame will allow us to assess whether students were more or less likely to graduate and get jobs.

With this application, we are asking for funds to cover 2 things: 1) participant costs in the first year of our program evaluation, and 2) a portion of the costs of Studio Lab's operations for the next year which will enable us to admit more students than we typically would.

First, we are asking for funds to cover participants' costs in our research meaning the cost of paying students \$50 annually to complete the end-of-year survey at the end of the 2024 academic year. In the long run, we hope to survey up to one hundred students \$50 (estimated)

Studio Lab seeks to prioritize justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in its admissions of both mentors and undergraduate students. Our goal is to admit a diverse range of projects across the College of Arts & Sciences, and a diverse group of undergraduate students. We facilitate meaningful connections between faculty, researchers, and students and often through project teams with 2 or more students working with a mentor (or sometimes with multiple mentors). Certain students, including first-generation college students and historically underrepresented groups, are much less likely to make these connections on their own.

We strongly suspect that programs like Studio Lab can help provide pathways for first-year students to connect with faculty, and provide a way for first-year students to make connections.