Tips for Preparing a High-Quality Application
for the Diamond Research Scholars Program

Do:

- Try to write the goals or questions of your project so that they feel "really small" in scope. As you work, you're going to keep learning more and more about your topic and come to realize that it's more complex and harder than you'd initially thought.
    - Let's look at two examples…
        - What is the experience of non-English speakers in Philadelphia?
        - What is the experience in 2021 of Puerto Rican immigrants who have limited English proficiency in Philadelphia?

    The first is 'bigger' than the second. There are more people who meet the criteria of "non-English speakers in Philadelphia" than "Puerto Rican immigrants with limited English proficiency." If you tried to investigate the first, you'd be forced to compare the experience of immigrants from Puerto Rico with those from Ghana or China or elsewhere. The more that you narrow the scope of your investigation, the richer your answer and the more targeted your questions can be.

- Include citations and specific claims from research literature to argue that you're doing something new and different.
    - Summarize what is already known about the topic (citing sources!) and then say, "but, we don't know X."
    - You want to convince the readers that you have read some of the important literature; the way to do that is to explain and cite from that literature.
- List specific research questions or goals and be clear about your terms.
- Explain how you will collect data. In doing so, you should try to provide some illustrative details (you don't have space to include a LOT of detail, but go beyond, "I will interview people").
        - Using the example above about the immigrant experience, you would need to define what "limited English proficiency" means. You would also need to be explicit about which immigrants will be included in your project: People who have been in Philadelphia fewer than 5 years? Less than 1 year?
- Explain what you will do with the data that you collect.
    - Often data from humans (or science experiments!) is ambiguous. The researcher will often have to make an interpretation of the meaning or how it compares/contrasts with other parts of the data. As you work, you'll end up writing a detailed manual that explains your choices. But, for the proposal, you want to convince a reviewer that you've started thinking about how to deal with ambiguous data.

- As an example from education, a professor might say, "I want students to think both critically and creatively." What does this mean? How will you decide?
  - For claims about literature or art interpretation, unless you're operating in a historicist perspective, you'll also be making choices about how to interpret aspects of 'text' (whatever the text is), and you want to provide some evidence that you have thought through some of the critical questions. If an author used an odd phrase that you want to claim means X, how do you know?

- Explain how the data you collect allow you to answer your questions.
  - You cannot know for sure what your data will say, but you can be thinking backwards about your data… If you want to be able to make the claim that "Latinx residents in Philadelphia often experience…" What data would support such a claim?
  - You can use sentence-templates: X data will address research question Y because…

- Learn about ethical standards of research from the Temple Office of Research Compliance.
  - If you will be working with human participants, you will need to complete an approximately 12-hour training before you can even submit an application to the IRB (Institutional Review Board) to approve your project. The application review process for a new project typically takes from 4 to 8 weeks.
  - If your project will require IRB approval, your application should show that you are aware of that and have a specific plan to obtain that approval in advance of the start of the program.

  Ask your mentor to help you do this!

Don't:
- Claim that you are interested in being a Diamond Research Scholar for the purpose of "learning what research is in my field." You want to make claims about why doing this project is interesting and then how the experience will further your career.
  - Do you intend to work post-grad in the area?
  - Do you just REALLY love Gabriel García Márquez?
- Use adjectives or adverbs unless absolutely critical. Head to Purdue's Owl: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/conciseness/index.html
  - Follow their suggestions for concision. When you think you can't get any more ideas in, use their "eliminating words" suggestions. Then, add more of the detail about your study! Repeat this process a few times.

One of the biggest challenges in academic writing is that we work within very strict word limits. We have to squeeze a LOT of ideas into a very small amount of text. We can think about this,

informally, as the 'idea density' of our text. You want to write a proposal that is idea dense, where there are no 'fluff' words and all the words matter and convey important aspects of your preparation, interest, and the design of the project. This is hard! Ask your mentor to help. Use the tips on Owl (I like recommending it because, hey, Owls flock together).

Read in print with a pen and cross out words that aren't needed. Put it down, walk away, come back a few days later and do it again. Then, do it again. Part of showing that you're ready for this project is writing an idea dense proposal, it's showing that you've conformed to the norms of academic work.

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