Guidelines for Faculty Mentor Recommendations
for the Diamond Research Scholars Program

Do:
- Make clear why you have the expertise to mentor such a project and that the student will be able to complete the project.
    - Repeating the last one… Can the student actually do what's proposed? Be clear that this is possible and warrant your claim.
- Consider using your letter to supplement the student's proposal and explain the scientific merit. You can merge this with your claims about expertise for mentorship.
- Write a letter that specifically addresses why this student is qualified to take on the project.
- Be explicit about how you will support the student—you might go so far as to write a gradual release timeline where you discuss an activity and how the student will be mentored and supported into doing it on their own. The more detail you can provide about a timeline, the better.
- Ensure that your description of the project closely matches the student description. Mismatches in the questions or processes or ideas suggest a problematic process and raise significant questions about the support that you'll offer the student.
- Ensure that there's enough detail in the proposal, between the student's text and yours, that a reader can develop an understanding of what the project entails and data analysis plans. We don't want students to collect a lot of data and then flail about trying to come up with and then apply an analytical scheme.
- Ask the student to do preparation prior to writing the proposal AND plan for additional work between the submission and eventual funding.
- Ensure that the project is clearly aligned with (some aspect of) the student's career goals.
- Ensure that the means of evaluating the student's readiness is aligned with the tasks that they will need to carry out. For example, claiming that a student is a good writer, but the project requires interviews and analysis of 'messy' data, doesn't obviously warrant the claim that that the student is prepared.

Don't:
- Expect to use the Diamond Research Scholar as a Research Assistant. This is meant to be a student project. At the least, you've got to make clear what the student will own and lead.
- Use words that people outside your field won't understand without clearly defining them.
- Write about yourself very much… You only need to justify that you're a good mentor. This isn't about you. Make this about the student.
- Use generalities. Offer specifics with examples. "X is a good student and already does graduate-level work and asks insightful questions." This is a lovely sentence. Support it with specific details.

- Assume that even the most competent student is ready for independent work. Reviewers don't look favorably on vague claims of support like, "we'll meet once or twice a month" or plans that rely on student initiative like, "we'll meet whenever the student requests a meeting."
- Take away responsibility from the student. Don't do the data analysis. Don't do the design. Don't do the work… This is a student project. Don't count on getting any publication or academic 'credit' for it. You're doing this for the student.
- Copy or basically copy a letter of support for another student. Readers will know… And then question your commitment.
- If you do quantitative or scientific work, write so that reviewers outside your field (including those who might not do quantitative work) can read the proposal and get a decent sense of what's going on.