As I began my endeavor to select a research topic I found myself struggling to pinpoint one area that I wanted to focus on. Although my interests ranged from student development theory to student affairs administration, selecting one topic seemed too limiting. It wasn’t until one specific conversation over coffee that I found my topic.

It was a normal day with a normal friend. We grabbed coffee at a local shop and caught up about what was going on with each of us. Then our conversation took a turn for the worse as we ventured to current news topics, one of which being gay rights. To them, there was nothing more detestable. The pure, unfiltered vitriol they spoke with caused me to realize that something needed to change. Something needed to be done, and I was somebody who could make change a reality. In that moment, I found my research topic: attitudes and discrimination towards sexual minorities on a college campus.

Although I now had my topic and knew that I wanted to conduct original research, I had no prior experience with data collection and was unsure of how to begin. My advisor for the project, Dr. Hugh Crethar, recommended that I meet with Dan Chaney to begin developing the instrument to be used for my study. While I only expected Mr. Chaney to assist me in locating instruments, he went far beyond that. After meeting with Mr. Chaney for an hour I had several instruments in-hand, learned how to efficiently navigate academic articles, and became acquainted with resources such as Google Scholar and EBSCO Host. Before meeting with Mr. Chaney, books were the only method of research I had even considered using. Afterwards, my eyes were opened to the immense realm of academia which has since propelled my project forward.

After the meeting, I began to explore my overarching topic and quickly discovered a plethora of research on related subjects. While discrimination towards sexual minorities was my
main topic, I was able to connect literature related to sexual identity development, minority stress, gender differences, and workplace discrimination. These new topics provided a dynamic view of the underlying implications and individual factors which had the potential to accentuate sexual minority discrimination. This broad array of subjects helped further develop my research statement and hypothesis in addition to expanding the scope of related topics to be discussed.

After initially connecting new subjects to my overarching topic, and organizing the subjects for the literature review, I began to explore each topic through Google Scholar. This one tool enabled me to connect topics together by locating articles connected through citations, furthering the depth and breadth of articles supporting my overarching topic. Throughout the process, I would discover new sources of information within books, articles, reports, and even periodicals that steered me in the proper direction. Many of these resources were found within the Edmon Low Library itself. The library’s staff aided me on multiple occasions whether it was assistance locating a specific volume of a book or an academic article from 1979. Not only was the library staff helpful in locating research materials, but they were instrumental to the development of my survey. This can be seen as the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Knowledge and Attitudes Scale, which Mr. Chaney assisted me in finding, comprised 28-items of the 43-item survey which was used to collect data.

While further exploring my topic and developing my survey, I came across an article which stated that discrimination could be rooted in religion. Thinking back, I recalled a personal account I had read in which the individual had experienced varying degrees of acceptance and rejection among different religious individuals. This raised an interesting thought: Was it religion that causes rejection of sexual minorities or was it based on how religious a person is? After contemplating this notion, I concluded that another instrument should be added to my study. By
implementing the methods learned from Mr. Chaney to find instruments and working with Dr. Hubach in the College of Education, I discovered the Centrality of Religiosity Scale which enabled me to measure each respondent’s degree of religiosity and test its relationship to sexual minority discrimination.

As the process continued, I found myself requiring a more in-depth understanding of stylistic writing, educational statistics, and research methods, all of which could be found within the library. Over the course of several weeks, I spent hours in the library becoming acquainted with print resources to further my understanding of writing and reporting standards found in the APA publication manual. Additionally, I was able to study the various means of statistical analysis and sampling methods including bivariate correlations, analysis of variance, and convenience sampling to appropriately craft hypotheses to test. Without the extensive resources found within the library, it is safe to say that my project would not be as developed as it currently is.

Throughout this process I have learned to efficiently utilized the resources available to me through the Edmon Low Library. With the help of the library’s staff, extensive online resources, and print guides to writing I have been able to develop a topic discovered over coffee into a comprehensive paper consisting of original research and recommendations for university administrators moving forward.