The idea for my research topic began when I took Behavioral Pharmacology with Dr. Hall, where I learned about behavioral models of psychiatric disorders. I took particular interest in Dr. Hall's research, which specifically focused on genetic and behavioral models of addiction. After being accepted into the Department of Psychology Undergraduate Honors program, I approached Dr. Hall about being my research mentor for my thesis. My thesis topic combined my interest in behavioral models with Dr. Hall's experience in addictions research, aiming to develop a behavioral model of escalation of alcohol consumption, a key feature of alcoholism, in 4 different transgenic strains of mice. These transgenic strains had varied levels of expression of one of two genes that have been implicated in alcoholism—the Dopamine Transporter and the Vesicular Monoamine Transporter 2.

Dr. Hall was the main person who helped me clarify my research question and suggested effective ways to choose appropriate sources for my research project. The main requirements for the sources I used were that the sources needed to be either original research or a published literature review. While I did request and use some articles that were unavailable through the NIH library and UMD library, I mostly used articles that I could access through one of those resources. For my literature review, I wanted to use both sources that addressed the initial findings related to the topic, as well as more current sources so I could provide an accurate representation of the knowledge of the topic. When I needed to search the stacks at McKeldin for physical journal articles, the staff was always very helpful in helping me locate the articles I needed. Through the guidance of librarians at McKeldin and Dr. Hall, I became very efficient in finding and evaluating sources for my project. I was fortunate in that I stayed in line with my initial project proposal, however, Dr. Hall and I designed experiments to expand the investigation of our research question of how genetic predisposition to alcoholism impacts consumption behavior in mice.

Dr. Hall provided me with a great number of articles he had on file from when he was actively researching alcohol consumption in rodents. He also gave me the names of key researchers in the field, and suggested I look up their more recent work. After the initial direction, we spoke more about the topics to be addressed in my paper, and then I would search for appropriate sources. I mainly used ResearchPort, the NIH library, and McKeldin library. I used PubMed to perform general searches for the topics I needed sources. Once I would find a source that addressed the question, I would try to find the full text version through ResearchPort. For some of the seminal articles that defined important concepts in the field, I would go to McKeldin and get the original article from the stacks, as there was no electronic version online. One strategy I found particularly helpful was going to the citations list of articles I found, so I could find other related articles all in one place. I also used the related sources feature on PubMed, so I could look through related research to get the most comprehensive view of the topic possible.

Potentially the most impactful realization from this whole project was understanding how I could apply my interest in science and research to improve understanding of a salient mental health issue. Before this research experience, I had already been interested in a research career. In fact, I chose to transfer to the University of Maryland, College Park because of the Psychology Undergraduate Honors program and the extensive research opportunities available to all students. This experience showed me how, by applying myself through research, I can have

the potential to impact our understanding of complex entities like addiction, and hopefully work towards more effective treatments for mental health issues like alcohol abuse and dependence. Through my research experience, I was thoroughly impressed with all of the resources available at UMD to help students successfully investigate a research question. I received support in so many ways—attentive staff, a large variety of journal articles that could be accessed online or in the library, and a great place to study in the Terrapin Learning Commons for the many late nights I spent completing my research project. The only thing I can think of that could have helped my experience more is possibly designing videos or guides to help students use citation programs (in my case, EndNote). I ended up google-ing how to use the program, and found step-by-step documents hosted by other university libraries on how to maximize the usefulness of my citation program. Other than that specific resource, I found the libraries at UMD to be extremely helpful in helping me complete my research project.