What is your role at EMU?

I have worn many hats in my five years at EMU. I came in as a doctoral fellow for the Educational Leadership program in the department of Leadership and Counseling and assistant volleyball coach for the EMU Eagles. Shortly after my commencement I was involved in the Student Success Assessment Council for the Division of Academic and Student Affairs. My love for teaching initiated with involvement in the UNIV program through the Holman Success Center and transitioned to teaching in the Higher Education Student Affairs and new Interdisciplinary LEADership Minor program. Aside from teaching, I advise the Alpha Kappa Lambda Fraternity, and have consulted and served groups such as the Early College Alliance, Honors College, Greek Life, and Academic Success Programs, and external groups such as Intentional Legacies and various Sports Programs.

Can you briefly describe your current research?

I am immersed in my dissertation, which is an historical study of women's emergence into intercollegiate athletic leadership at Eastern Michigan University. The purpose of this study is to understand the gender disparity in athletic administrators at NCAA Division I institutions. This study seeks to explore the relationship of women in athletic leadership before and after Title IX, which legally stated federally funded educational institutions could not discriminate on the bases of sex. Title IX legislation largely became associated with athletics for the equal offering of opportunities, funding, and support for men and women. Following the legal action women's access to participate in athletics exploded, but representation of women in athletic leadership (coaching and administration) plummeted and has been slow to grow in the 40+ years following Title IX. I hope to understand this phenomenon from an organizational perspective. I have selected EMU because it was the largest teacher training school west of the Allegheny mountains, the first to establish a physical education teaching program and has and remains a majority women for student enrollment. This institution varies from the Ivy league schools which initiated higher education in America and where intercollegiate athletics originated. I wanted to understand how women have come to occupy leadership roles in intercollegiate athletics at an institution that has historically and culturally supported women in higher education. It is also important to note that this study is an organizational study that analyzes how athletics as a department came to exist at a school like EMU.

How did you become interested in this topic?

I became interested in the topic because of my personal experiences as an administrator and head coach at an NCAA Division III institution. Throughout my 6 years in collegiate athletics I was the only or one of few women to work in athletics. This dynamic left me in a sort of dissonance that I wanted to explore further. This led me to pursue a terminal degree with a research interest of women in intercollegiate athletic administration.
What is the most fascinating thing that you’ve found concerning your current topic?

I have discovered so many amazing things throughout this journey. I had no idea that EMU played such a prominent role in the origins and development of the Physical Education field and intramural sports programs in the country. I also have developed a sincere admiration for the Physical Education faculty and administrators at EMU including greats like: Fannie C. Burton, Wilbur P. Bowen, Ruth Boughner, Augusta Harris, Lloyd Olds, and many others. The archives have a way of bringing to life the story and influence the faculty members had in shaping EMU. I also have learned the PE majors on campus were the largest group of majors at the Normal School, prior to adding other colleges. Exploring both the Men's and Women's Division of PE, athletics, Clubs and Recreation has allowed me to better understand the parallel paths and philosophies of sport throughout the 100 years prior to Title IX. The 1972 decision of Title IX dramatically changed the playing field of athletics for men and women. The investigation of men's and women's athletic organizations and leadership prior to Title IX, provides context to the contemporary make up of intercollegiate athletic departments. Although this is one case, what plays out at EMU is similar to what was experienced all over the country for Men and Women's Athletic departments.

How do you connect with library faculty?

I absolutely love them! I give them all the credit for my sustained motivation and interest in pursuing this historical study. My familiarity with history or archival research was limited before plunging into the resources at EMU. With the assistance of [staff member] Amber Davis and [Archivist] Alexis Braun Marks, my time spent in the Archives viewing room has been productive and enjoyable. Alexis goes above and beyond in connecting me to resources, documents, and interviews with retired faculty or historians of EMU. My relationship with the library faculty and resources has exceeded my expectations and provides a quality research experience for triangulation of data and process of integrity.

Which library resources do you use?

A majority of my time has been spent in the University Archives, but I also have utilized their web-resources for historical images, and digital copies of early Aurora (yearbook) collections.

What is one thing that you wish everybody knew about the library?

That the staff is overjoyed to assist in your research and will contribute to the journey of inquiry. I had no idea what resources were available until I started to discuss my research with the staff and more and more data became available. They helped me think about my questions and ideas differently. I also learned about the online archival resources that I had no idea existed. This is also helpful to access outside of regular library hours.

How do you evaluate source material?

Great question! I have learned to triangulate the data and check multiple sources that either confirm or disconfirm the evidence. For instance, cross-checking with the newspaper publications, Board of Education records, Aurora’s, and primary sources of documentation. This can be tedious but exhilarating because you feel like a detective!
If there is one thing that you wish the library provided for your research, what would that be?

They have been tremendous thus far, and since this is my first historical pursuit it is hard to compare. However, some of the boxes I have been working through have yet to be processed, which may make things a bit easier, but I understand this takes time and is an on-going process in Archives.