Because the Liberal Studies program is composed primarily of classes outside of the English Department, advisement of students presents unique tasks. There are many options that students have for major and elective requirements and misunderstanding or misreading them could cause a set back in completion. Our advisors do not see advisees often in classes. An advisee may never take a class with their advisor. Furthermore, our classes are made up of students from all majors. For these reasons, we felt it important to update our advisement strategies with the revision of the program. It was also important that while we tried new advising strategies, we kept all new majors with one advisor to reduce the disorganization that can result with many people doing many different things.

During the Fall 2020 semester, Tico Tenorio’s alternative assignment was to seek new ways to reach advisees and develop the blueprint for advising within the Department. This included new ways to track advisee information so the DC and other advisors can get information they need to analyze the needs and successes of advisement within the department. It also included piloting intrusive advisement strategies.

Tico created a survey on Google forms for advisees. The information collected about advisees is now stored on a shared drive for all advisors for easy access. It also makes it possible to take data samples and keep track of which advisees have met with advisors and which still need to. This is important because advisement is mandatory before students can register for their second semester with the College.

Using this system, a student, declared or undeclared, could meet with *any* advisor to create an educational plan, choose classes for an upcoming semester, or update information needed by the Department. Additionally, the DC can reach out to all advisees that transfer to UOG to maintain communication and support the students as they transfer credits back to GCC to complete the degree. This is a major responsibility with the revised program because those students who transfer to UOG from the degree have the option, as they always have, to leave GCC before they complete. However, the revised program makes it easier to transfer credits back to GCC since many of the major requirements have been replaced by electives. This, however, will require extensive follow up and intrusive advisement.

Due to the mandatory advisement policy, Tico also met with 44% of the advisees to create educational plans, review Degree Works profiles with them, and report back on any errors in Degree Works (many were identified and passed on to AIER for correction). This takes a substantial amount of time since checking Degree Works requires manually comparing each student’s profile with the program guide for each class under gened, major requirements, and electives. During this process, we discovered that a handful of students were inaccurately identified as Liberal Studies majors. Additionally, Tico met with 24% of those identified and provided advisement for them to change their majors. Another 24% never completed the survey or replied to any of the numerous emails advising students that their Spring 2021 registration was contingent upon meeting with Tico during the semester.

This back and forth work proved that it is difficult to get a complete and accurate list of majors. The department was provided a list from Banner however feedback from those students showed that many of them were actually declared in another program. A Degree Works-generated list was requested many times but never received. This caused many additional hours of work as both Tico and the DC had to work to ensure that the students who were mislabeled were in fact listed as part of another program.

We will continue to track our FA20 pilot group in order to determine whether Liberal Studies majors are completing their degrees within their target dates, changing their majors, transferring to UOG before completing the degree, and/or dropping out of the program. This information will assist in assessment of the program as well as future revisions to the program.

Tico will also be leading the second advisor training this month to review her findings, glitches in the system that advisors need to be aware of, best practices, etc. She is refining a previously created FAQ for advisors to include these lessons and strengthened advisement strategies.

Some recommendations for the Liberal Studies advisers and the College at large include:

* Closer communication with summer academic advisors and the Department to strengthen advisement of students **before** they begin their first semester.
* Currently, when students apply to GCC and declare their majors, they are provided with the name of a faculty advisor. However, because faculty are unavailable during the summer, these students often choose courses without assistance. As a result, some of these students take the incorrect courses and will be unable to meet their target date for graduation. Can language be added to students’ acceptance letters to inform them of summer advisors until faculty return?
* Continue to make registration for the upcoming semester contingent on meeting with their advisors.
* Work with the appropriate offices to ensure that students’ majors are correctly identified in the system and that they are assigned advisors in the correct program.
* Improve communication between departments regarding course offerings so that majors are able to complete their program by their target date.