



Policy AC056: Preferred First Name

Recommended for Approval by: Scott E. Miller, Senior VP for Academic Affairs and Provost

Approved by: Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson, President

Effective Date: 07/01/2022

A. Intent

To define how a preferred first name may be approved for use in certain student and other records.

B. Definition(s)

Preferred First Name: A preferred first name is defined as an alternative to the individual's legal first name as designated by the individual in university systems. These may include individuals who prefer to use: a middle name or nickname instead of a first name; an anglicized name; a name to which the individual is in the process of legally changing; or, a name that better represents the individual's gender identity.

Legal Name: The name used for official governmental documents, such as licenses, passports, and tax forms.

Family/Last Name: The name officially recorded in university systems and documents. This name can only be changed by submission of appropriate legal documentation that authorizes a change.

C. Policy

The University recognizes that many members of its community use a first name other than their legal name first provided to the university to identify themselves. For some students, alumni, and employees, a chosen or preferred first name may be an important component of their identity. Therefore, Pennsylvania Western University has established this policy to allow students, alumni, and employees to indicate their preferred first names to the university community, even if they have not changed their legal names. Anyone is welcome to use a preferred first name. The use of a preferred first name does not change the legal name on University records.

A student or employee's preferred first name will be used instead of the person's legal name in select university-related systems and documents as listed below.

- Class and Grade Rosters (for students and employees taking courses)
- D2L (Learning Management System)
- Diploma [See Note 1]

- Most Employee Self-Service Navigation Panes
- Most Self-Service Portal Panes
- Official Employee Email Display Name
- Official Student Email Display Name
- Online Phonebook Directory [See Note 2]
- Press Releases
- Social Media Sites
- Student or Employee Identification Cards [See Note 3]
- Other Venues, as appropriate

For those who have indicated a preferred first name per this policy, legal names will continue to be used for official university records including, but not limited to the following:

- Benefits Enrollment
- Degree Verifications
- Employment Documents
- Employment Verifications
- Enrollment Verifications
- Financial Aid and Scholarship Documents
- Legal Documents and Reports Produced by the University
- Paychecks, W2s, and other Payroll documents
- Student Account Statements (Bills)
- Student Employment Documents
- Transcripts

Preferred first name requests will be denied or revoked when the name is deemed inappropriate, including, but not limited to, attempts to avoid a legal obligation, fraud, obscene language, or misrepresentation. Reports of such activity will be handled pursuant to University policies, procedures and applicable law by relevant individuals/offices. Depending on the individual and circumstances involved, this could include the offices of Human Resources, Judicial Affairs, Social Equity, University Legal Counsel, and/or other appropriate offices and law enforcement agencies.

The University reserves the right to suspend the individual's privilege to update their preferred first name.

D. Procedure(s)

Students: Upon first contact with the University, information submitted online will provide the option of a preferred first name. After matriculation, students requesting a preferred first name can submit the request online through their self-service portal. Requests will be reviewed and approved by the Office of the Registrar. Note that students will only be permitted to change a preferred first name once per semester. [See Note 3]

Employees: Employees requesting a preferred first name should contact the Office of Human Resources. Preferred first names for employees will be reviewed and approved by this office. Please note that employees will only be permitted to change a preferred first name once per semester. [See Note 3]

Alumni: Alumni requesting a preferred first name should submit the request to the Office of Alumni Engagement. Requests will be reviewed and approved by the Office of Alumni Engagement.

Appeals: Students, alumni, or employees who feel their preferred first name change was denied

unjustly due to discrimination may file an appeal with the Office of Social Equity.

E. Related policies

Confidentiality of Student Records (AC053)

Name Change Policy (AC055)

Transcript and Diploma Policy (AC041)

University Diplomas, PASSHE Policy 1989-01-A

F. Contact Information

For additional information, please contact the Office of the Registrar, Office of Human Resources, or Office of Alumni Engagement, as appropriate.

G. Policy Review Schedule

All policies will be reviewed every two years or on an as needed basis if a change in BOG, PASSHE or Pennsylvania law would create the need for an immediate change.

[Note 1] The name appearing on the diploma will revert to the Legal Name if the student does not indicate a diploma name when they apply for graduation.

[Note 2] Students may choose to restrict directory information, including the listing of their (legal or preferred) names, by notifying the Office of the Registrar, in writing, before the end of the first week of the semester; see PennWest Policy AC053: Confidentiality of Student Records. Employees may also choose to restrict the listing of their (legal or preferred) names in the online directory by contacting the Office of Human Resources.

[Note 3] The student or employee will be provided a one-time waiver of the fee to update the Student or Employee Identification Card to accommodate a change in the preferred first name. Subsequent changes will result in an applicable fee.