

AO 9: Preferred Names

Students may identify by a name other than their legal name. To foster an inclusive campus environment, any current student may use a preferred name at NS. We strive to use preferred names whenever a legal name is not required.

9.1 Using Preferred Names

Students will be referred to by their preferred name whenever possible within the campus community. When it does not constrain NS's ability to comply with federal or state regulation or law or the ability to enter into a contract, a designated preferred name will be used in place of, or in addition to, the legal name in University-controlled systems and documents. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Class and attendance rosters.
- Grade rosters.
- Student services/success/support applications.
- Canvas.
- Student ID cards.
- Internal, NS-funded scholarships.
- Student email accounts.

9.2 Designating a Preferred Name

Students may use their Student Center account to designate a preferred name. To request use of their preferred name in a NS-controlled system that does not allow self-service name changes, students should contact the Office of the Registrar.

In some systems, the preferred name will appear immediately. Some systems require manual changes or have fixed syncing schedules; there may be delays in displaying the preferred name in these systems.

Creating or changing a preferred name will update a student's NS email address; the previous email address will no longer exist. The student is responsible for updating any individuals, accounts, or organizations that use the old email address to ensure that their email messages are delivered.

9.3 Limits and Exceptions

While NS will use preferred names wherever possible, we will be unable to do so in some situations.

9.3.1 External Systems

Legal names will be used in all University-related systems and documents that require a verified legal name or that must be matched to external systems or databases that use legal names. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Academic transcripts.
- Financial aid and Veterans Administration (VA) documentation.
- Student employment paperwork, including payroll and tax documents.
- Applications for in-state residency.
- Student account statements.
- Immigration documents.
- Standardized and/or proctored testing services.
- External scholarships.

9.3.2 Inappropriate Names

The University reserves the right to refuse to implement:

- A preferred name that would lead to misrepresentation.
- A preferred name used for illegal purposes or to avoid a legal responsibility.
- Multiple preferred names simultaneously for the same individual.
- Preferred names that contain threats of violence or violations of copyright or other legal claims.
- Preferred names that include non-alphabetical (a-z) characters.
- A preferred name that NS deems inappropriate (vulgar, obscene, offensive, fictional, or that creates confusion with another person).

9.3.2.1 Identifying Inappropriate Names and Appeals Process

The Office of the Registrar will regularly identify newly submitted preferred names that are or may be inappropriate.

1. Flagged preferred names that clearly violate any condition above will be denied by the Registrar.
2. Preferred names that potentially violate those conditions, or where the Registrar is uncertain whether it violates them, will be reviewed by a three-person committee consisting of the President's Chief of Staff, the Director of Community Engagement and Diversity Initiatives, and the Director of Academic Advising. The Registrar will summarize the reasons each name is potentially inappropriate. The committee may consult with NS legal counsel or others with relevant expertise, as needed.
3. The committee will vote on each flagged name. A simple majority is required for approval.
4. If a preferred name is denied, the Office of the Registrar will remove the name and notify the student.
5. A student whose preferred name is denied may appeal by contacting the Registrar for the appropriate form.

6. Appeals will be reviewed by the Vice President of College and Community Engagement. Their decision is final and cannot be appealed.

9.4 Student Responsibilities

A student who designates a preferred name accepts any financial obligations at NS under either the legal or preferred name.

Students should always be prepared to reference their legal name and provide corresponding identification when legal identification or official information is necessary. A student ID card with a preferred name cannot be used as a form of identification in some situations where a student ID card is normally accepted, such as when completing employment paperwork. Students using a preferred name on their student ID card are encouraged to get a legal state ID card, driver's license, or passport for identity verification purposes.

The use of a preferred name may lead to more intensive scrutiny when seeking certain federal or state security clearances or background checks (such as applications for employment in law enforcement, education, or other positions that require background checks). Students are encouraged to disclose this information to the investigating authorities in advance to avoid unexpected discrepancies and delays in processing their job applications.

9.5 Related Information

- Appeal form available from the Office of the Registrar
- NSHE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council [Preferred Name Option Resolution](#)

9.5.1 Revision History

- Approved by Dr. Laura Naumann on 10/06/2020; Dr. Vickie Shields on 10/08/2020; and President Bart Patterson on 2/18/2021.