

**Resolution to Add Preferred Name Field to  
University of Wisconsin Colleges Student, Faculty, and Staff Records  
By UW-Waukesha LGBTQIA Resource Center**

**Introduction**

The UW-Waukesha LGBTQIA Resource Center (LRC) asks all University of Wisconsin Colleges (UWC) Student Government Associations, campus Collegia, the UWC Senate, and other relevant committees to support its call for the addition of a preferred name field to all records for UWC student, faculty, and staff. The LRC asks for this support in order to advocate for the right of all members of the UWC community to be addressed by the name that they prefer and, in particular, the right of transgender faculty, staff, and students to be addressed by their correct names, regardless of roadblocks they may be experiencing to changing their names legally.

**Resolution and Recommended Policy (based on UW-Madison's policy<sup>1</sup>)**

Be it hereby resolved that University of Wisconsin Colleges shall implement the following policy in its record keeping practices for faculty, staff, and students, and that, given the particular importance of this policy to transgender students, implementation will begin with student records:

It is the policy of the University of Wisconsin Colleges that any faculty, staff, or student may choose to identify themselves within the university community with a preferred first and/or middle name that differs from their legal name. As long as the use of the preferred first and/or middle name is not for the purpose of misrepresentation, it will appear instead of the person's legal name in University of Wisconsin Colleges related systems and documents, except where the use of the legal name is required by University of Wisconsin Colleges business or legal need.

**Background**

Institutions of higher learning across the United States are moving towards the practice of providing faculty, staff, and students with the ability to indicate a preferred name in their records. Such institutions include Princeton, University of Chicago, Case Western Reserve University, the Ohio State University and the University of Michigan. Furthermore, this practice is rapidly becoming the norm across the University of Wisconsin System, with UW-Madison, UW-Stout, and UW-Parkside having already made this change and UW-Milwaukee currently in process of doing so. The UW System's version of PeopleSoft currently has preferred name as an option that can be added, and it will be a standard option in the update of the software that the UWC is about to get.

**Rationale**

The preferred name option is essential for several populations of students, faculty, and staff. This option would allow people whose legal names do not match the names they use to be correctly addressed by other members of the UWC community in face-to-face situations and digital environments, like Desire2Learn (D2L). Effected populations include transgender people, people who use middle names or nicknames as their first names, and recently married or divorced people.

This change is especially important for transgender students in the UWC, a population that is growing as more and more people come out as transgender and transition at earlier times in their lives. Many of these students have preferred names that do not match their legal names for variety of reasons, including lack of money required to go through the legal name change process in Wisconsin (around \$300 in Milwaukee County), lack of access to mental health professionals and healthcare in general, and being in the closet as a transgender person to family members who support them financially with room, board, and tuition. These issues are even more salient in regards to UWC students who often live with their parents or guardians and do not have the economic and social privileges that enable people to change to their legal names and transition in the ways they so desire.

While this mismatch between legal name and name in use has the effect of making all of those affected by this problem feel unwelcome or embarrassed, it is particularly detrimental to transgender people because it requires them to out themselves in order to be correctly addressed. This problem is perhaps best illustrated in the case of transgender students and instructors whose coursework includes online classes and/or face-to-face classes with substantial use of D2L. Because D2L uses students' and instructors' legal names, a transgender student or instructor whose name clearly indicates one gender would be outed when they ask students and/or the instructor in the class to use their preferred name that clearly indicates a different gender. For example, if a transgender student's legal name is John Smith, that student would be required to disclose their transgender identity in order to be called by their preferred name of Jane Smith.

In example above, as well as any number of virtual and face-to-face interactions that are part of the daily lives of faculty, staff, and students in the UWC, transgender members of our campus communities are faced with horrible choices that innately violate their basic rights to privacy. They must choose between opening themselves up to harassment by revealing their gender identity<sup>2</sup> or being alienated from their campus community through constant experiences of gender dysphoria, defined by the American Psychiatric Association as the “clinically significant distress associated with the condition [of gender nonconformity].”<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, the addition of a preferred name field to all faculty, staff, and student records would enable the UW Colleges to better retain our talented faculty, staff, and students and more achieve the institution’s educational mission for all members of our campus communities.

### **Questions about the Resolution**

Any questions about the this document should be directed to Lisa Hager, Co-Director of the UW-Waukesha LGBTQIA Resource Center and Assistant Professor of English and Women’s Studies, at [lisa.hager@uwc.edu](mailto:lisa.hager@uwc.edu).

---

<sup>1</sup> UW-Madison Preferred Name Policy, Office of the Registrar.  
[http://registrar.wisc.edu/preferred\\_name.htm](http://registrar.wisc.edu/preferred_name.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Transgender people experience physical and mental violence due their gender non-conformity. In educational environments, transgender students are more likely to experience bullying and less likely to report such behavior because they often experience harassment by teachers and administrators as well. See the 2011 National School Climate Survey by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)  
<http://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2011%20National%20School%20Climate%20Survey%20Full%20Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> “It is important to note that gender nonconformity is not in itself a mental disorder. The critical element of gender dysphoria is the presence of clinically significant distress associated with the condition . . . For a person to be diagnosed with gender dysphoria, there must be a marked difference between the individual’s expressed/experienced gender and the gender others would assign him or her, and it must continue for at least six months.” American Psychiatric Association,  
<http://www.dsm5.org/documents/gender%20dysphoria%20fact%20sheet.pdf>