

Preferred Name Guidance

Use of a Name Other Than the Legal Name

The University of Pittsburgh recognizes the need or preference for students to refer to themselves by a “preferred name” other than their legal given or first and/or middle name. Where a student seeks to use a preferred name for a significant reason, and such use is not intended for the purposes of avoiding legal obligations, in jest, or for misrepresentation, the University acknowledges that, where possible and practical, a preferred name can be used in the course of University business and education.

Only the first and/or middle name may be changed to a preferred name; the last/family name must remain the same as the full legal last name in the University records system. The preferred name may be used in University communications and informational materials, except where the use of the legal name is required by University business or legal need. This may include financial, medical, and law enforcement documents; transcripts; diplomas; W-4 forms; I-9 forms; 1098-T forms; payroll documents; Visa/immigration documents; employment applications and related documents; background check documents; insurance documents; and student conduct records.

Development to accommodate use of a preferred name in University systems is ongoing. Not all University information systems, databases, and processes may be able to display a preferred name and many uses of a student’s name require display of the legal name; therefore, individuals who utilize a preferred name should always be prepared to reference their legal name and provide corresponding identification when necessary. It is also helpful to include your student ID or PeopleSoft number when corresponding with university officials. A preferred name designation is not a legal name change.

Students may use a preferred or chosen name in place of a legal name on campus. To set a preferred name, log into myPitt, search for "preferred name" or "Accounts Self-Service" and access Accounts Self-Service. At the bottom of the window, where you're asked "Set preferred name?" click the Yes button. Enter your preferred first and middle (optional) name and save the update. The PeopleSoft application will be updated within a few minutes; the transition to Canvas and e-mail will occur during the normal processing schedule and can take up to 48 hours to complete. The preferred name will also be added to additional information systems that are able to accommodate it. Distribution of a preferred name to these other information systems will not be immediate and will occur during the regular course of business.

Legal Name Change

To change your name on all University of Pittsburgh Student Records, you must provide legal documentation such as a marriage license, birth certificate, court order, or divorce decree. Students should submit a written request for the name change, accompanied by a copy of the appropriate legal documentation, to the Office of the Registrar on their home campus. Fees may be assessed in cases where historical records are affected.

Once you present the legal documentation, all appearances of your name under University control will be changed to the new name. If you are employed on campus, you must present the appropriate documentation to Human Resources. Typically, you will go through the person responsible for payroll and other human resource issues within the department where you work. If you are both a student and an employee, you will need to do both.

How you obtain a Court Order depends on the jurisdiction where you live. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, you must apply to the Court of Common Pleas of the county where you reside. The exact procedures vary from one county to another and may change from time to time.