


Memorandum

To: Suzanne Laychock, Chair, Faculty Senate
From: Satish K. Tripathi, President 
Date: May 9, 2025
RE: Faculty Senate Resolution: To Amend the University at Buffalo's Preferred/Chosen Name Policy

Thank you for forwarding the Faculty Senate's Resolution to Amend the University at Buffalo's Preferred/Chosen Names and Pronouns Policy.

As you know, UB has maintained a Preferred/Chosen Names policy since 2017. The policy was updated in 2023 to include pronouns and expand coverage to employees and revised again in March 2025 to remove any language prohibiting or limiting the use of a preferred last name. In particular:

- The Preferred/Chosen Names and Pronouns Policy Guidance document acknowledges that being able to use a preferred last name is important to the UB community for the reasons set forth in the Faculty Senate resolution. UB is in the process of modifying institutional systems to enable the use of preferred last names and will update the Preferred/Chosen Names and Pronouns Policy Guidance once these changes are made. It is important to share that enabling the use of preferred last names will take time given UB has over 250 systems that use or display names. IT is working closely with HR, Registrar and EDI to modify these systems.
- As the existing Preferred/Chosen Names and Pronouns Policy Guidance document notes, if a student, faculty or staff member has entered a preferred/chosen name to reflect their gender identity, they are able to submit a request for a different UB IT Name/email address.
- According to the office of the VPCIO, using special characters in names and subsequently in usernames/email addresses will cause technical issues in some systems that will interpret those characters as pieces of code. Current IT best practice is to use only alphanumeric characters for names/usernames and that is consistent with the current UB policy on Preferred/Chosen Names and Pronouns. The university will need to explore whether adding a limited set of special characters that can impact pronunciation and/or gender identity might be possible with our existing IT infrastructure.

In closing, I am supportive of the Faculty Senate's recommendations and the university is in the process of implementing these changes, with the exception of special characters as noted above.

These above changes reflect our ongoing commitment to fostering a more inclusive and supportive campus environment. UB will continue to communicate University policy, process, and system changes to the university community and stakeholders.

Thank you.

**RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO'S
PREFERRED/CHOSEN NAME POLICY**

TO: THE FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

FROM: EQUITY AND DIVERSITY COMMITTEE
Chair: Bernadette Gargano

DATE PROPOSED TO FSEC: JANUARY 15, 2025

DATE APPROVED BY THE FSEC: **JANUARY 28, 2025**

DATE APPROVED BY THE FS: MARCH 25, 2025

EFFECTIVE DATE:

WHEREAS, in 2016 at its 172nd Plenary Session, the SUNY-Wide University Faculty Senate passed a unanimous resolution, as revised, calling for SUNY-wide implementation of a chosen name and gender identity policy and recognized that:

- (1) The use of an individual's chosen name "creates equitable access to a person's lived experiences and intimate realities;"
- (2) "[B]eing forced to use a name that does not represent one's lived experience and intimate realities is potentially harmful, traumatic, and damaging to a person's health and wellness;"
- (3) Persons "who are transgender, adopted, in domestic partnership, transitioning, victims of domestic violence, those with non-traditional family structures and any other number of possibilities such as members of ethnic, religious or indigenous groups, desire the right to have access to [chosen and] preferred name and gender identity representation on our campuses;" and
- (4) "[B]eing able to use one's preferred name...enhances our cultural climate and acts as a mechanism for inclusion and creates a welcoming environment."

WHEREAS, in 2017, the University at Buffalo (UB) adopted a "Preferred/Chosen Name and Gender Pronouns" policy, which was last revised and updated in 2023, "recogniz[ing] that individuals may use a first or middle name other than their legal name to identify themselves and...may [also] use pronouns that reflect their gender identity" and adopting a policy for the use of preferred/chosen names for first and middle names.

WHEREAS, in 2022, Governor Hochul "directed all 64 SUNY campuses to update their policies regarding the use of a chosen name and pronouns."

WHEREAS, UB's "Preferred/Chosen Name and Gender Pronouns" policy, as revised in 2023, limits the use of preferred and chosen names to first and middle names and does not include the use of preferred or chosen last names or the use of special characters (non-alphabetical characters).

WHEREAS, Faculty and staff have raised a need for the ability to choose preferred (or different/prior) last names for research and publications, or special characters (non-alphabetical characters) in a name (for example, characters that can change a woman's name to a man's name if the special characters are omitted).

WHEREAS, members of the UB community, including faculty and staff members, have raised serious concerns with the UB Faculty Senate and its Executive Committee about the inability to use chosen last names, which disproportionately affects women as well as the members of our community identified in subsection (3) of the first paragraph.

WHEREAS, UB's Faculty Senate's Committee for Equity and Diversity has consulted with UB's Vice Provost for Inclusive Excellence and the Director of the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and has learned that both of their offices have had UB community members raise concerns about the inability of such members to use chosen last names for the same and similar reasons.

WHEREAS, UB is openly "committed to ensuring equal employment, educational opportunity, and equal access to services, programs, and activities without regard to an individual's race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, gender, pregnancy, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation."

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the UB Faculty Senate recommends that the UB President and Provost amend UB's Preferred/Chosen Name Policy and all related forms, programs and systems to include the use of chosen last names/surnames and special characters (non-alphabetical characters) on a university-wide basis for all faculty, staff, students, and community members as defined in the current policy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the UB Faculty Senate recommends to the UB President and Provost to further amend UB's Preferred/Chosen Name Policy to clarify that the use of chosen names, including chosen last names/surnames, may be used for university email addresses and that such email addresses must be changed upon request to reflect the usage of chosen names, including last names/surnames on a university-wide basis for all faculty, staff, students, and community members as consistent with the law and defined in and with the same ability for University review as already provided in the current policy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the UB Faculty Senate recommends to the UB President, Provost, and Chief Information Officers, Information Technology System Administrators, and the Human Resources Department and its officers and administrators that they implement the necessary processes consistent with the law and procure any necessary software, programs, or technology to implement the amended policy and allow faculty, staff, and students and other community members the ability to use their chosen names, including last names/surnames, special characters (non-alphabetical characters), and gender identities as expeditiously as possible.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the UB Faculty Senate recommends to the UB President and Provost that the implementation team for this project openly and systematically communicate these policy, process, and system changes to UB stakeholders and community members.