I. PURPOSE AND INTENT

The University recognizes that many members of its community use names other than their Legal Names first provided to the University (Legal Name) to identify themselves. For some students and employees, a chosen Preferred Name may be an important component of their identity. Therefore, the University has established guidelines that allow students and employees to indicate their chosen preferred first names to the University community even if they have not changed their Legal Name.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. **Legal Name**: An individual’s name that is usually given at birth and recorded on the birth certificate or name that is listed on any government-issued identification document. This is the default Legal Name at the University.

   *The Legal Name is sometimes referred to as Official Name or Birth Name in some University and external documents. A Legal Name may be the name changed under the law by virtue of a court order or other legal action and there may be separate processes to change the Legal Name on University records.*

2. **Preferred Name**: A First and/or middle name chosen by the student that is different from their given Legal Name that may be used in select areas of business and communication by the University. This may be the name by which a person is generally known. The University reserves the right to refuse a student’s use of a Preferred Name if it is done for the purposes of misrepresentation, to avoid legal obligations or any other illegal purpose.

   *The Preferred Name is sometimes referred to as the Primary Name in some University and external documents.*
III. STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. Guidelines: The University of South Florida students may choose to identify themselves within the University community using a preferred first name that differs from their Legal Name. A student or employee may request a Preferred Name to appear instead of the person’s Legal Name in select University-related systems and documents, provided that the Preferred first name is not being used for the purpose of misrepresentation. When making the request, a student accepts the risk of confusion and unforeseen results from using different names on University records. The Legal Name will continue to be used in all University-related systems and documents that require a verified Legal Name. This Policy does not address Gender designation which may need to be addressed by specific offices outside of this Policy.

B. Academic Records

1. General Student Records: Students with a current USF NetID may request a Preferred Name using the process available at the University of South Florida Office of the Registrar. Students may also request to use a preferred name by sending an email to IT Identity Management at idm-help@usf.edu.

2. Transcripts: A student’s Legal Name will continue to appear on official Transcripts and financial aid, military and veteran benefits documents, as well as any document issued for tax purposes.

3. Diplomas: It is recommended that the diploma name match a Legal Name, however a Preferred Name may be considered. Neither titles nor degrees previously earned will be included as part of a graduate’s name on a diploma.

   All requests are reviewed on a case by case basis. The Preferred Name requested on the diploma must match the Preferred Name listed in Oasis or other University IT processes. This is necessary for future non-third-party verification that may take place.

   If a student elects to change a Diploma name back to a Legal Name after graduation, the student will be required to request and pay for a replacement diploma. Legal Name changes are only permitted in cases where changes have been obtained and approved through the Courts.

4. Apostille and Notarizations: Diploma apostille can ONLY be provided when using a Legal Name. To maintain compliance with state law, notarizations may be available only when using a full Legal Name.
5. **Degree Verification:** Degree verification may be impossible or difficult as third parties who have been provided a Diploma reflecting a Preferred Name will not be able to verify a degree through the National Student Clearinghouse because of name mismatch. Enrollment/degree verification is provided using the full Legal Name.

6. **International Documentation and Diploma Name Inconsistencies:** For Graduates planning to live or work outside of the United States there may be unforeseen complications if a student’s diploma is not consistent with other legal documents such as a transcript, passport, or birth certificate. Although the University of South Florida considers the diploma to be a ceremonial document and the University may grant a student’s request for a Preferred Name to be reflected on a diploma, some countries may require a diploma (in conjunction with an official transcript) for various legal, immigration, and employment purposes. Choosing to print a Preferred Name on a diploma may result in unforeseen complications due to discrepancy between a diploma and other documents (e.g. transcripts, passport, birth certificates, etc.) that contain a Legal Name. To avoid such complications, USF recommends printing a Legal Name on a diploma if a student plans to live, study, or work outside of the United States. In addition, international students are responsible for understanding any legal requirements unique to their status and the consequences using a Preferred Name.

7. **Student, Graduates, and Applicants in Professional Schools and Colleges (specifically including but not limited to Health Colleges and Professional Programs)** Before opting to print a Preferred Name on a diploma, students should consider that that professional licensing requirements may require use of a Legal Name. For example, State Bar application and licensure and federal employment/guidelines require the use of a Legal Name. Using a Preferred Name on a diploma may result in rejection, delay, scrutiny, and/or requirements for additional proof of identification associated with any application for employment, licensure, credentialing, visa application, and/or other processes that require verification of your education records. In addition, some accreditation or oversight boards may not permit a College or Program to approve a Preferred Name on any academic records. For those reasons, USF Health and other Colleges issuing professional degrees may establish additional restrictions or requirements on the ability of a student to use a Preferred Name on academic records including diplomas.

C. **Employee Records:** Employees may update their Legal Name in their personnel record by completing the [Name Change Form](#) and can request additional name changes using the process available at the [University of South Florida Division of](#)
Human Resources (DHR). Employees may request to use a Preferred Name by sending an email to IT Identity Management at idm-help@usf.edu.

D. University Records: To the extent academic records may be updated and the technology programs may be phased in and updated, the University will continue efforts to update records in applicable and appropriate places for students and employees. IT will determine how a Preferred Name will be maintained and may develop specific parameters for the needs of administrative offices and programs including Banner, Archivum and Oasis.

*Current Responsible Office: Academic Affairs

*Refer to the appropriate Responsible Office website for a current name of the Vice President or other Responsible Officer.

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