Gender Expression/Name Change
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I’m trying to locate information on gender expression and names changes. We have a student who would like to be called by a different name and I would like to make sure we follow appropriate procedures.

One of the best comprehensive guides I can point to you is put out by the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals, click the link here to view. It’s pretty comprehensive in terms of best practices and issues to think through. If you look at the ATIXA Member Library under the “GLBTQiA” heading, you’ll see tons of resources on this subject, especially the documentation requirements that various schools have put together.

Another item to think about is to check to see if there are any state laws in your jurisdiction that require that a person have a court-ordered legal name change. This is uncommon, but good to check for your jurisdiction. Assuming none, as you’ll see in the various policy examples in the Member Library, you’ll see different approaches as to when the “preferred name” is used (e.g., class rosters, ID cards, diplomas) and areas where the legal name will need to be used (e.g., financial aid, transcript). Generally speaking, in my experience you can use the preferred name in many places.

Also, try to get a handle on how name changes “proliferate” across your various technologies on campus. Ideally you have a field for “preferred name” or can add a “preferred name” in your SIS. Then, where does that information go? Does it populate other databases across campus? This can quickly get overwhelming to think through, but it can be really helpful to educate students about what systems on campus will show their “preferred name” so that the student can proactively think through any challenges that might arise (for example, if a database in alumni/parent relations now refers to the student with their new preferred name and a staff member unintentionally “outs” the student to the family). I’ve thought through these tech. challenges on a few campuses.

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