Using Preferred Names: Problem Solving Strategies for Faculty

How will the use of Preferred Names affect faculty?
- Starting with the Spring Semester 2018, Blackboard will show students' preferred names.
- Faculty should use the class lists on Blackboard to learn student names, check attendance and when calling on or addressing students.
- Faculty should understand that implementing the use of preferred names at the University is ongoing and there may be situations where questions arise about a student's name.

Why Are Preferred Names Important?
- Calling a person by his or her preferred name shows respect.
- Using students' preferred names contributes to the University's goal of providing an empowering, safe and nondiscriminatory educational and work environment. A name is an extremely important parts of a person's identity. Using the wrong name can cause a person to recall a time and experience when they couldn't express who they really are.
- Most names and pronouns are gendered. Using a preferred name that may match a person's identity/expression prevents that person from being the subject of questions.

Should I ask students for their Preferred Name or Pronouns?
Yes! Start by introducing yourself and identify your preferred pronouns. "Hello, I'm Jennifer Smith. My pronouns are her, she and hers." This creates a safe and inviting space for students to similarly introduce themselves. If students provide preferred names and pronouns, write them down and use them during the next class.

What If I Use the Wrong Name/Pronoun?
- Apologize for the mistake and move forward. Harping on a mistake can focus unwanted attention on the person who was just called by the wrong name.
- Don't say, "I'll never get that name/pronoun right." This suggests that using the person's preferred name or pronouns is burdensome and you won't commit to honoring their identity.

What do I tell a student who asks me to use a preferred name in class, but whose preferred name isn't on BlackBoard?
- Tell the student you are happy to call the student by the preferred name and write it down.
- Tell the student about the *Preferred Name Policy.* Encourage the student to contact Office for Institutional Equity to implement use of their preferred name as much as possible on campus.
- As the *Preferred Name Policy* is implemented, some students' preferred names may not match a name on a class roster or students' appearance. Anticipate solutions, such as saying "Do you have I.D. that matches the name in my records?" Don't say, "You don't look like 'Jack'."
- Check BlackBoard again in ten days. OIE approves preferred names on a weekly basis, and then IS&T and other departments manually enter the preferred name into BlackBoard and other systems. If the student only recently requested use of a preferred name, the preferred name may yet appear in BlackBoard in a week or two.

Is there anything about the use of preferred names on campus that faculty should know?
- The University has some computer systems that do not have a field for students' preferred names. It will take time for the University to add this field to all of the systems on campus.
- In the meantime, preferred names are being changed on a manual basis.
- There may be times when computer systems update and erase manually entered preferred names. As a result, it is possible that a student will tell you that he or she has a preferred name, but you don't see the preferred name in Blackboard.
- Class rosters from PeopleSoft will not contain students' preferred names, but rosters from Blackboard will. For this reason, pull class- roster information from Blackboard.

How do I avoid inadvertently offending someone with a preferred name?
- Be respectful of privacy, especially around topics directly involving sex or genitalia.
- If a personal question is necessary, ask permission to ask it and wait for permission to be granted before asking something that delves into a student's private life.
- If you wouldn't want to be asked a particular question, assume that the student doesn't want to be asked that question either, and don't ask it.
- Consider rephrasing the question so that it is less personal. For example, in a course titled, the Psychology of Human Sexuality, don't ask, "Why did you take this course?" Instead say, "What are some reasons a person might enroll in this course?"
- Don't make assumptions about gender identity or expression. Instead, understand that for some students, gender identity or expression does not match physical appearance or sex assigned at birth.
- Use terms like "cisgender" instead of "normal." Saying "normal" implies that anything else is not normal, and is weird, strange or freaky.
- Don't say, "You are trans, Chris. Can you tell the class about this issue from your perspective?" Instead say, "Does anyone else want to comment on this topic?"
- Don't say, "What is your real name?", "Is that a preferred or a real name?", "Why don't you use your real name?" or "How did you come up with Riley?" Instead say, "Thank you for telling me. I will call you 'Riley'."

What if students have questions about preferred names?
- Direct preferred name questions to the Office for Institutional Equity at oie@csuohio.edu.
- Tell students to contact OIE to implement the wider use of their preferred name on campus.
- Refer students to the Preferred Name Guidelines http://www.csuohio.edu/sites/default/files/Guidelines-Use-of-Preferred-Names.pdf or FAQ's http://www.csuohio.edu/compliance/preferred-names-frequently-asked-questions.