



**Title:** Preferred or Chosen First Name Policy  
**Effective Date:** August 18, 2022  
**Issuing Authority:** Provost and Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance  
**Policy Contact:** Employees: Associate Vice President for Human Resources  
[hr@mercer.edu](mailto:hr@mercer.edu), 478-301-2786  
Students: University Registrar  
[registrar@mercer.edu](mailto:registrar@mercer.edu), 478-301-2680

## Purpose

Mercer University recognizes that individuals may wish to be addressed by names other than their legal first names. For this reason, the University allows students, faculty, and staff to request a preferred or chosen first name to be used wherever reasonably possible. If a preferred or chosen first name is not used, an individual's legal name will continue to appear in all University systems.

## Scope

This policy applies to all students and employees of Mercer University.

## Exclusions

None

## Definitions

As used in this policy, the following term(s) have the meaning specified below:

**Employee:** any faculty (including, but not limited to, regular, visiting, or adjunct), any individual who has an appointment at the University, and all regular and temporary staff.

**Legal Name:** the name that identifies a person for legal, administrative, and/or official purposes. A person's legal first name generally is the name given for the purpose of registration of birth and which then appears on a birth certificate or is maintained within a governmental office of vital birth records. An individual's legal name is used on a Social Security card.

**Preferred or Chosen Name:** the first name that a person uses instead of a legal first name. The use of a preferred or chosen name does not constitute a legal name change. The legal first name will continue to be used on certain University documents as stated in this policy.

**Student:** any person pursuing academic studies at the University, including, but not limited to, any person currently enrolled, previously enrolled, or who is reasonably anticipated to seek enrollment at a future date, or a person who has applied to or been accepted for admission.

## **Policy Statement**

Students may initiate this process by submitting the appropriate form via the MyMercer portal and allow five business days for processing. A preferred or chosen first name may only be requested once per academic year. The University will notify the student in writing via Mercer email if the request has been approved. If approved, faculty will be notified of the student's preferred or chosen first name.

New employees may request a preferred or chosen first name during the new hire onboarding process. Any employee may contact Human Resources to request a preferred or chosen first name be used in University systems.

Once a request has been approved, Mercer students, faculty, and staff may proceed to use their preferred/chosen first names for identification. Mercer University will make every effort to update University systems in a timely manner and will utilize the preferred/chosen first name in the proper circumstances based on the request.

Please note that some records may require the use of legal names only. Individuals who are utilizing preferred/chosen first names should always be prepared to reference their legal names as well as provide their Mercer University identifications when necessary.

Mercer University reserves the right in its sole discretion to decline or revoke a preferred/chosen first name request on the grounds that the name may be used for criminal or misrepresentation purposes, may be harmful to the reputation or interests of Mercer University, and/or conveys inappropriate or offensive language or meaning. If a request is declined or revoked, the individual will be notified in writing via Mercer email of the rationale for denial or revocation.

### **Preferred/Chosen First Name Will Appear:**

- Athletic team rosters
- Online directory
- Class rosters
- Commencement programs
- Dean's List
- Library records
- Canvas Learning Management System
- Residence Life rosters
- Email address and/or display name

**Legal First Name Will Appear:**

- Financial aid and billing records and communication
- Official and unofficial transcripts
- Paychecks and paystubs
- Registrar's Office records (i.e., permanent student file records)
- Study Abroad (i.e., travel documents, signature documents)
- Some official forms or correspondence from the University such as residence life contracts, departmental or program notices, new hire forms, etc.
- Transfer credit evaluation
- Tax records
- Diplomas and certifications
- Medical records
- Admissions records
- Disciplinary records
- Law enforcement records
- ID cards
- White coats (health sciences)

Mercer University is a community of respect. All students, faculty, and staff are expected to respect an individual's preferred/chosen first name and use the preferred/chosen first name in the appropriate setting. Willful or malicious refusal to use a Mercer student or employee's preferred/chosen first name will be considered grounds for appropriate disciplinary action.

**Student Privacy Concerns**

Consistent with the Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA), Mercer University allows for the release of directory information, which includes a student's preferred/chosen first name. If a student does not want directory information disclosed to external organizations or persons, including a student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s), a student may elect to opt out of releasing such information via the MyMercer portal. It is the student's responsibility to fully read this policy and be aware of the locations where the preferred/chosen name will appear. For more information on FERPA, please refer to Student Rights Pertaining to Educational Records section of the University catalog.

**Additional Resources**

Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA): [policies.mercer.edu/family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-ferpa/](https://policies.mercer.edu/family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-ferpa/)