

**FINAL REPORT**  
**Chosen Names Task Force**  
**November 14, 2016**

*(Submitted in conjunction with policy recommendations)*

The work of the Chosen Names (formerly Preferred Names) Task Force formally began when we received our charge in Spring Semester, 2015. Its history dates further back, however. In fall of 2012, Shawn Rickert, the Diversity Chair in the Student Association, began to openly share some of the challenges he was facing as a transgender student on our campus. His leadership prompted a number of discussions on campus, and a task force came together to study Gender Inclusivity. We submitted our final recommendations in Fall Semester, 2014. Guided by Genny Beemyn's "Transgender Checklist for Colleges and Universities" and "Best Practices to Support Transgender and Other Gender-Nonconforming Students," two documents created under the aegis of the Transgender Law and Policy Institute, we evaluated campus practices and made suggestions for change.

During the Fall Semester of 2014, another group of students stepped forward to discuss the challenges they were facing. They began in the Student Association (SA), presenting a Resolution in favor of a Chosen Name policy; SA passed it. They took their campaign to the University Senate next and received significant support. Formally charged by University Senate and the President of the State University of New York at Fredonia, the Chosen Names Task Force began its work. One of the most important agreements that we reached at the outset was that the policy would not apply only to transgender individuals. Among those in the pilot program now, we also have individuals who identify using a middle name, those who do not identify along the gender binary but also do not identify as transgender, and those who have been abused by an individual who incorporated the use of their legal name into the abuse. Although we reached out to international students as well, none have decided to take part in the pilot program. We specifically aimed to ensure that the Chosen Names program would also be available to employees, though until very recently we did not have any volunteers for our pilot program.

Our charge was challenging, probably more than any of us realized at the time. We began by using Google docs to compile a list of every place that we could think of where names appeared, what entity controlled or populated those lists, and what potential problems might greet us as we tried to introduce a chosen name option. To complement this brainstorming process, we also had multiple conversations with various persons on campus who would be affected by a chosen name policy (and did not have a representative on our committee), including faculty and staff in Athletics, Public Relations, the Counseling Center, the Health Center, Reed Library, and Residence Life. We also sought input from department chairs.

Simultaneously, we did research to learn how other schools were adapting to the need for chosen name policies. We surveyed multiple schools' websites, compiled their policies, and scheduled telephone discussions with many of the individuals charged with creating and overseeing their policies. The task force as a whole met for a Skype discussion with Keith Williams, Registrar, University of Vermont. UV has been the leader in adopting chosen name policies, from working with students and employees to give voice to the necessity for such programs to finding creative solutions to implement them. Jeffry Iovannone and Jennifer Hildebrand also had a conference call with Dean Leonard Sancilio, who is overseeing SUNY Geneseo's attempts to implement a chosen name policy.

In Fall 2015, we implemented a pioneer program that allows students to have a chosen name entered into Banner. That name appears only on their course rosters, and this applies only to rosters generated through Banner; it did not translate into ANGEL and it does not now work with OnCourse. In the pilot program, students can also obtain an ID card from FSA with their chosen name. That program is still in place, but it is time for Fredonia to move forward. It is clunky to say the least; individuals are asked to contact Jennifer Hildebrand to have a Google doc shared with them. She communicates with them to highlight exactly what the pioneer program does and does not do, then gives them instructions to complete the process. Registrar Scott Saunders manually inputs the new information, and then contacts FSA so that they can do the same. The official chosen name program needs to allow self-service: anyone using it should be able to read a clear policy online that informs them of exactly where their chosen name and legal name will appear, enter their information through an online form, and have that information automatically transferred into Banner and, through Banner, other campus software.

We have reached the point where our committee can no longer shepherd this project forward. A policy, or at least a draft of a policy, needs to be put into the hands of each department, program, and unit on campus so that they can begin to identify what steps will be necessary for them to comply. (Our proposed version is included.) Then each unit can work with Information Technology (IT) to establish a series of projects that will need to be completed to bring that unit into compliance with the policy.

While we hope to see it become policy that students and employees be allowed to use a chosen name in all of the areas we indicated in our draft, it should be emphasized that there are two key areas that students have indicated are most important and therefore should be given top priority: OnCourse and email addresses. We also understand that for various reasons, these are two of the most challenging changes to implement.

There is still much work to do. In addition to the significant labor that will be involved as units self-assess and then develop implementation plans with IT, we need to continue to provide outreach and education about why chosen name policies are so important. Many individuals have expressed a desire for a policy, or at least for guidance, on the use of pronouns. Though we determined that pronouns fell outside of our specific charge, our task force agrees that further discussion is needed regarding the best way to acknowledge individuals who use pronouns besides he/him and she/her. Beemyn's research shows that most trans college students today identify outside of the masculine-feminine binary. Persons identifying outside of that binary are likely to use pronouns that are less familiar to the general populace and therefore less accommodated and less respected. More education and awareness is needed in regard to this aspect of trans identity.

Those of us on the committee who have had the opportunity to interact with the students participating in the pilot program (we have only just recently gotten a pilot program volunteer who is an employee) can attest to how vitally important chosen names can be to our students. Students have shared that hearing their legal name can incite a tendency to self-harm or episodes of post-traumatic stress disorder. A Chosen Name program can help students to feel welcome on our Fredonia campus by helping us to combat some of the most frequently reported challenges that students face. According to Beemyn, 31-39% of trans students experience harassment on campus; 17-22% fear for their safety; and 65% of trans masculine, 55% of trans feminine, and 18% of gender non-conforming students hide their identities out of fear. Beemyn indicated that there is a direct correlation between fear and student success; one-third of trans or gender non-conforming students consider leaving their school due to a

negative climate. As our campus engages with recruitment and retention strategies, the Chosen Name policy can help send the message that Fredonia respects and values everyone.