

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION	ACAF Academic Affairs
POLICY NUMBER	ACAF 3.06
POLICY TITLE	Establishing and Changing a Student's Official Name
SCOPE OF POLICY	USC System
DATE OF REVISION	December 10, 2024
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE	University Registrar

PURPOSE

This policy outlines the procedures for establishing and modifying a student's official name on university records. It aims to ensure accuracy, consistency, and compliance with legal requirements regarding student identification.

DEFINITIONS

POLICY STATEMENT

- A. When an individual applies for admission to the university, the admitting office must determine the applicant's complete legal name. Once the legal name has been identified, that becomes the official name of record and will remain unchanged unless documentation is provided to justify altering the original name on the student's official record, electronic or otherwise.
- B. Any discrepancy between the name given on the application and the name appearing on other documents in the admissions file must be clarified before the individual actually enrolls in classes for the first time.
- C. Students who have previously attended the university and are on the student information system cannot have the name there changed upon readmission without proper documentation.
- D. Prior to the initial registration for classes, a student's name may be changed by the responsible admissions office; after registration, the name may be changed only by the Office of the University Registrar.

The University will establish and maintain accurate student records using the student's legal name as their official name. This name will be determined at the time of initial application and will remain unchanged unless appropriate legal documentation is provided. Any discrepancies or changes to the official name must be resolved through established procedures, ensuring consistency and accuracy across all university systems and records.

PROCEDURES

- A. Determining and Documenting the Legal Name

1. Each admissions office in the university system determines the legal name of each applicant at the time of initial application to the university. That may be done in any appropriate fashion, up to and including requesting a birth certificate. The admissions application used by each admissions office must ask for the applicant's legal name.
2. The legal name is entered on the student information system in its entirety if space permits. The official name will include the first name, one middle or the maiden name, and the last name.
 - a. Students may not drop the first name and use a middle name as the first name.
 - b. Married women may use their first, middle and married name or first, maiden and married name.
 - c. Hyphenated last names are permissible if the last name field on the student information system will accommodate all the characters.
 - d. Students may use two names (first and last) or initials only when legal documents show that no other names exist or that only initials have been assigned.
 - e. If the entire name exceeds the space available on the student information system, what is appropriate will be used for the official name. However, documents in the student's file will indicate clearly the entire name.
3. When a former student applies for readmission, an official name already exists on his or her record in the Office of the University Registrar.

Students who attended previously but do not appear on the student information system cannot be readmitted until the official name has been obtained from the Office of the University Registrar.

If the student's name on the application differs from that on the student information system, then the student information system name is the official name. The student information system name will not be changed by the Office of the University Registrar until documentation is received to justify a change. The responsible office will be notified when such action is taken by the Office of the University Registrar.

B. Official Name Changes for Applicants to the University

1. An applicant for readmission whose name differs from that on the existing record must provide legal documentation (see B.3) to support the change.
 - a. A new applicant for admission who requests a name change from the name originally provided on application documents and/or determined by the Admissions Office to be the legal name must provide legal documentation (see B.3) to support the change.

- b. Acceptable documents for making a name change are birth certificate, marriage certificate/license, divorce decree (upon divorce a woman may legally resume use of her maiden name), court order for legal name change, adoption documents, or a valid passport. Any other documents (i.e., driver's license, Social Security card, notarized statements) are not acceptable.
2. When legal documentation is needed, the admissions officer will:
 - a. Send the applicant a letter explaining the requirement (sample letters from the Office of the University Registrar are available on request) and include the Student Name Change Affidavit form (AS-1A);
 - b. Place a hold on the student's registration to prevent enrollment until the name discrepancy is resolved or use/leave the existing name on the student information system until the problem is resolved.
3. When documentation is received, the admissions officer will:
 - a. make the appropriate changes on the student's file and, if necessary, send copies of the documentation to the Office of the University Registrar with a request to change the student information system
 - b. if the student has an existing record, send a copy of the documentation to the Office of the University Registrar with a request that the student information system and the existing record be corrected
 - c. file the original documentation and name change request in the student's current admissions folder.
4. If a hold has been placed on the student's registration, the office making the change to the student information system will release it.

C. Official Name Changes for Degrees

A degree application which includes a name not on the student information system requires research of existing documents to determine whether the name may be included on the diploma.

1. The Commencement Coordinator on any campus sends a copy of the degree application and the student information system name from the student system screen to the Office of the University Registrar for verification.
2. The Office of the University Registrar researches the case, notes on the materials whether documentation of the degree names has been found (OK/NO) and returns them to the coordinator.

3. The coordinator sends the degree applicant a letter of explanation and a request for documentation along with a Student Name Change Affidavit (AS-1A).
 4. When documentation is returned, the coordinator indicates such on the application and sends the documentation to the Office of the University Registrar where the student information system and other records will be changed immediately.
- D. Questionable or doubtful situations which cannot be reconciled otherwise will be referred to the University Registrar on the Columbia Campus, who will obtain a ruling from the Office of the General Counsel.

RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES

HISTORY OF REVISIONS

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
February 1, 1995	New policy approval.
October 31, 2016	Policy content reviewed October 2016. No substantive revisions required.
December 10, 2024	Policy revalidated and updated to standard template.