

Preferred Name FAQ's

Stanislaus State recognizes that many individuals use names other than their legal (or "primary") names for a variety of personal, cultural, or other reasons. Accordingly, students may use a preferred name (or chosen name) for a variety of university-related purposes when an individual's legal name is not otherwise required. Please find below a list of frequently asked question and their corresponding answers.

What is a preferred name?

A preferred name is a name an individual chooses to use other than their legal name, which is often the name given at birth and appearing on an individual's birth certificate or naturalization certificate. There are many reasons someone may choose to use a name other than their legal name. International students, transgender students, students known by middle names or nicknames, and others may wish to use a preferred name. Preferred names may be used for first or middle names, provided that the preferred names are not used for the purpose(s) of fraud, misrepresentation, or to evade legal obligations.

What is a legal name ("primary name") and when is it required?

A legal name is the name that appears on your birth certificate, naturalization certificate, passport, driver's license, or U.S. Social Security Card. Most Stan State systems use the term "primary name" to refer to an individual's legal name. It's important to note that the term "primary name" is imperfect, as a person's legal name is not always the primary name they use.

An individual's legal name is required to be used on official and unofficial transcripts, official student records, financial aid and scholarship records, and employment and payroll related documentation. Accordingly, on these types of documents students should expect to continue to see their legal name, the "primary name" listed in the system.

How do I begin using a preferred name for university-related purposes?

Individuals may begin using a preferred name for university-related purposes by logging into their MyStanState Student Center from the [Stanislaus State homepage](#).

Students: Click on **MyStanState** in the center of the page and, in the **Personal Information Section**, click on **Names**. Click the **Add Preferred Name** button. Enter the name you wish to show and then click the Save button.

How does a change to my legal (or primary) name affect my preferred name?

An individual who legally changes their name, must submit necessary paperwork to the **Enrollment Services Office** ([Student Record Update](#)) to update their legal name in university systems. Changes to an individual's legal name do not result in a change in the individual's preferred name, unless a specific request is made at the time the legal name change paperwork is submitted to university officials.

Do I have to use a preferred name?

No. Using a preferred name is entirely optional. If an individual does not enter a preferred name, the individual's legal name will continue to be used for all university-related purposes.

How do I change my primary (or legal) name?

Students who wish to change their legal (or primary) name must first legally change their name pursuant to state law.

After a student has obtained a certified copy of the legal name change document (i.e., legal name change or marriage certificate), the student will need to complete the [Student Record Update form](#) and return it (and all other necessary documentation) via email to the registrar@csustan.edu or to the Enrollment Services Office, MSR 120.

Are there any restrictions on how many times I may change my preferred name for university-related purposes?

An individual may enter a preferred name for university-related purposes at any time in their MyStanState Student Center. Students should be aware that changing their preferred name multiple times may lead to identification issues and increased errors in relevant systems, reports, files, and reporting.

Are there any restrictions on the use of a preferred name for university?

A preferred name should be the name an individual uses in social interactions and the name you want others to use when referring to you. An individual may not use a preferred name for the purpose of fraud, misrepresentation, perpetration of another person's identity, or to evade legal obligations. Preferred names may not include profanity, vulgarity, discriminatory language, or sexually suggestive words. Stanislaus State reserves the right to remove a preferred name if it contains inappropriate or offensive language.

What happens if a student enters an inappropriate or obscene name?

University officials will regularly review a list of preferred names entered by students.

Students who enter names containing inappropriate or obscene language or for those used for the purpose of academic misconduct or fraud will have their names removed at the discretion of university officials and reverted to the primary name.

When should I enter a preferred name?

Individuals are encouraged to enter a preferred name as soon as possible, even at the time of application for admission.

Students are strongly encouraged to begin using a preferred name prior to the beginning of the semester in which the student wants the name change to take effect. Class schedule and class roster may not get updated during the semester. If a student enters a preferred name after classes have begun, students are encouraged to speak directly with their instructors to ensure these individuals are aware that the student now uses a preferred name and to minimize errors related to attendance, grading, etc. as the semester progresses.

If I enter or change a preferred name after the semester begins, will my preferred name automatically update on the class roster?

Yes, but not all faculty regularly update their class rosters during the semester. Students who enter a preferred name after classes begin, may wish to let their professors know of their preferred name.

Will my preferred name be used on mail sent to my permanent address?

It is possible. The majority of print mail relates to official records that require legal (primary) name, such as transcripts, financial aid, payroll, etc. Accordingly, most print mail will be sent to legal (primary) name, but there may be instances where a mailing will use the preferred name.