



**2011 Preliminary Recommendations of the People's Gender Council of  
Middlebury on the Preferred Name, Gender Marker, and Pronoun System at  
Middlebury College**

ATTN: Office of the President, Office of the Dean of the College, Office of the Registrar, Office  
of Human Resources, Library and Information Services, Commons Deans, and Department of  
Public Safety

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PGCOM Subcommittee on Individual Empowerment through Official Self-Identification:

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*As Middlebury College students and faculty, as members of the People's Gender Council of Middlebury (PGCOM), and as advocates well-versed in the complex diversity of human experience, we submit the following recommendations for administrative use in developing the most accessible, inclusive, and empowering process for those seeking to change their preferred name, gender markers, and/or pronouns within Middlebury's internal data systems.*

## **I. Guidelines and General Suggestions**

A) The applicant should be given as much autonomy over the process as possible. Ability to self-identify should always take precedent over forcing the applicant's identifying information into a standardized mold. While we recognize the logistical necessity of having certain standardized components of this process, our recommendations attempt to envision a system in which nobody falls through the cracks or has their identities erased or devalued by the institution.

B) Online forms (described in section II) should be well-advertised, understandable, and accessible for all people, regardless of gender identity/expression, ethnocultural background, or position as a student, staff member, or faculty member at the College. This means that the form should not be unnecessarily complicated, and that it should not force anyone to list their information in a way that is not commensurate with their cultural and gendered experiences.

C) Applicants should be adequately informed of where these changes will be reflected, and who will be able to see them.

D) Clearly indicate that applicants may use this form to change some identifying information, but not others. For example, applicants may keep their legal name as their preferred name, but change their gender markers and pronouns. The varied purposes of this system should be reflected in the title, yet to be determined.

E) Those in charge of developing, implementing, and running this system should stay in communication with University of Vermont (UVM) Information Services for troubleshooting questions, as this recommended system is similar to theirs. Also, please contact Hampshire College Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program (clpp@hampshire.edu) for an example of a form that is accessible to people of all identities. (The form you want to see is their CLPP Conference registration form. We prefer the layout of their form over UVM's.)

F) The availability of this form should be advertised to incoming students before they arrive on campus, so they have time to change their preferred name and gendered information before classes start.

## **II. Name Change Web Form**

A) Web form should be at go/namechange and should be listed on numerous parts of Middlebury website (e.g., Diversity & Community, Student Services, the Dean of the College; the Registrar; Admissions, Accepted Students; Centeno: Parton, CCHR, Office of Health & Wellness; Commons pages; Human Resources; Chellis House Women's Resource Center; Public Safety).

B) The initial link should take whomever clicks it to a page briefly describing the process and why it is important that the College offers it. (For example: "This system was designed for students, staff, and faculty whose name(s) and other identifying information is not accurately reflected in College data systems, whether due to changes in the applicant's preferences, or due to mistakes in official College data collection practices. The College offers this process as a means of recognizing and respecting people of all identities and backgrounds, in compliance with the Non-Discrimination Statement.") There will then be two links (and this is why this initial page exists):

- Click here if you're a student
- Click here if you're a staff or faculty member

These links will lead to very similar forms—different enough, though, that they probably shouldn't be one form. (We're certainly willing to hear suggestions for how we can make a universal form, since this is largely a technical question.)

- 1) We recommend that the student form, when submitted, be sent automatically to their Commons Dean.
- 2) An appropriate person or office will need to be chosen for staff and faculty (possibly the Office of Human Resources).
- 3) We will hereafter refer to this person or office as the **point person**.

C) Once you've clicked one of the two links, you are routed to the Middlebury College Central Authentication Service, where you log in with your Middlebury username and password.

D) The form, ideally, would then be pre-populated with certain information: your legal name, your current e-mail address, etc.

### **E) FORM:**

- 1) Your Middlebury ID number
- 2) Your Social Security number (or a comparable legal identifier)
- 3) Drop-down menu to identify Commons (for students only): this will determine which Commons Dean is sent the info in the form once it is submitted (assuming the Commons Dean is chosen as the student point person).

4) Your name as you would like it to appear in rosters, the directory, your e-mail alias and your ID card.

**i.** Since not everyone classifies the components of their name according to the Euro-American standard of "first-middle-last," we recommend a non-labeled write-in model with neutral signifiers; i.e., do not label the boxes "first" or "last," do not have one single box that says "list name in the order of last, first, middle," etc. Additionally, do not use Eurocentric examples like "Smith, Bob" to illustrate the "correct" way of writing in a name. These are not accessible, inclusive, or respectful practices.

**ii.** It should be clearly communicated that the applicant does not need to change every component of their name; e.g., they may change only their first name and not their last, and they need not include a "middle name" at all in the case that they do not have one, or do not want to.

**iii.** It should be clearly communicated that the applicant can list more than one word in each text field, so as to be inclusive of people with more than one first name or more than one last name, as well as people with hyphenated names.

**iv.** The preferred name section should be comprised of three text fields, labeled with neutral signifiers. These text fields roughly correspond to what is typically formatted as "first-middle-last" in Euro-American standard names. For example, label them "My," "Dancing Is," and "Off-Beat." ("Dancing Is" would demonstrate that multiple names can be entered into the same box; likewise, "Off-Beat" would demonstrate the use of hyphenation in names.) Clearly state that in the directory, the applicant's name will appear as "Off-Beat, My Dancing Is," while the applicant's ID card will state, "My Dancing Is Off-Beat."

3) Write-in box for gender marker

**i.** If this information needs to be standardized for data collection, "male"/"man" can be treated as one category, and "female"/"woman" can be treated as one category. We disagree with the fear that a write-in option will lead to too great a multiplicity of responses, though we are willing to discuss concerns about providing only a write-in box.

**ii.** Clearly state where gender marker information in particular will go; e.g., class rosters, data surveys, etc.

4) Check boxes for preferred pronouns (can select one, multiple, or no options):

- he/him
- she/her
- they/them
- ze/hir
- no preference
- prefer name only (no pronouns)
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**i.** Include a comment box beneath this section in the form for **students** with this prompt: "Specify here whether you would like your pronouns shared with any other members of the community (other than [point person]), and if so, with whom."

A. Include a comparable comment box for the staff/faculty form, if one seems applicable.

**ii.** Pronoun information should only automatically be shared with professors and colleagues at a later date, after all Middlebury community members are required to list their preferred pronouns in the data system. Singling out the minority of students, staff, and faculty who will utilize this option of preferred pronouns would be othering. However, it is important that those who wish their pronouns to be shared with other community members can have this option.

**iii.** We are willing to discuss whether this section should utilize radio buttons (can only choose one) or check boxes (can choose multiple). On our end, we want to create the most inclusive options possible, and recognize that people's preferred pronouns can fluctuate greatly and frequently; however, we acknowledge an ignorance surrounding the technological side of things.

#### 5) Comment box

**i.** Include a comment section where the applicant can write in suggestions for how to make this process more accessible and inclusive, as well as ask questions, share concerns, etc.

#### 6) At the end of the form, clearly state the following:

This information will be sent directly to [appropriate point person]. [Point person] will send you an e-mail to verify that the information is accurate, and that it was really you who submitted it. They will **not** have the discretion to deny your request, or to ask you questions regarding your changes.

By submitting this form you understand and agree that: **A)** your name change will appear in your ID card, your e-mail address, the directory, and [other systems especially important for the student or staff/faculty member to be aware of; e.g., class rosters for students], as well a host of internal data systems; **B)** your preferred pronouns will be sent to those you specified, if any; and **C)** your gender markers will be reflected in [class rosters, etc.]. This information will only be shared on the Middlebury network and does not affect any legal documentation used in communication with family members, the government, hospitals, etc.

You may submit this form more than once if you desire to change any of the above information in the future.

### **III. Conclusion**

We designed this form to be fairly flexible with the information we collect, and with where it goes. This form can be up-and-running in a short amount of time, and the submitted info can be redirected behind the scenes as the processes for changing info on Banner and in other systems is streamlined and simplified. We strongly recommend that this web form be available for applicant use by the end of the 2010-2011 academic year.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on the suggestions and questions raised in this document, and hope we can have this form available to members of our community in an expedient fashion!

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