

Using and Respecting Chosen Names and Pronouns

The University of Dayton is committed to our Catholic identity and its Marianist charism. This includes respecting the dignity of every person in thought, word and action as a creative and social being created in the image and likeness of God. We strive to make everyone feel welcomed, respected, safe and valued as full members of the University of Dayton community. Honoring individuals by naming and referring to them in the way they desire is one part of this.

In Marianist communities, all members are accepted as family and committed to supporting one another. That support includes using and respecting a person's chosen name and pronouns in a classroom, professional or social setting. Recognition of and respect for the person are central to our life as a Christian and educational community and are what allow us to pursue our common mission while being many diverse persons.

These guidelines can help members of the UD community use language that is respectful of the dignity of all members of the community.

What is a chosen name?

A chosen name (sometimes known as a preferred name, a nickname, or a name-in-use) is the use of a name, usually a first name, that is different from a person's legal name. There are many reasons why someone may use a chosen name.

What is the chosen name policy?

The University established a [chosen name policy](#) in 2019. This applies to people who identify themselves by a name other than their legal name. This preferred name can be used in University records and systems that do not require the use of a legal name. This policy is universal in that it benefits many in the community including transgender and non-binary individuals as well as individuals who prefer to use a nickname, middle name, or name that reflects their cultural or ethnic identity. The intentional or persistent refusal to use an individual's chosen name could be considered a potential violation of University policy and would be reviewed by the Equity Compliance Office.

What are pronouns?

Pronouns are a way of identifying people in conversation apart from their name. Gender pronouns are the terms people choose to refer to themselves that reflect their gender identity, for example he/him, she/her or gender-inclusive pronouns such as they/them or ze/zir. Some people use specific pronouns, any pronouns, or none at all. These pronouns may change over the course of one's life. More information about pronoun use can be found in the American Psychological Association's [style guide](#).

Why focus on pronouns and chosen names?

Exercising respect with regard to a person's chosen name and pronouns is a best practice in higher education settings. Sharing pronouns in introductions, on name tags, and in email signatures is a first step toward creating gender-inclusive interactions and environments. Because we cannot assume someone's pronouns just by looking at them, creating space for people to self-identify with their pronouns, if they choose, is an important way to be inclusive of all identities. Research shows that LGBTQ+ youth whose pronouns and chosen names are respected are at a significantly decreased risk of depression, anxiety, and suicidality (Russell, 2018).

Tips for using and asking about pronouns

- *If you are comfortable*, any time you introduce yourself, share your pronouns. This normalizes the respectful use of pronouns and contributes to a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ people.
- Invite others as they introduce themselves to share their pronouns *if they are comfortable*: this should always be optional, as some people may not be ready or comfortable doing so. Example: "As you introduce yourself, include your name, pronouns if you'd like, and class year."
- Avoid addressing groups using gendered language such as "ladies and gentlemen" or "boys and girls" and address groups of people as "everyone", "colleagues", "siblings in Christ," "friends," "y'all," "folks," or "students."
- Avoid saying "preferred pronouns": someone's pronouns are not a preference, but rather the only appropriate way to refer to that person.
- Use people's correct pronouns or preferred names consistently (in conversation both with and about them).
- If you make a mistake, simply correct it and move on with the conversation using the correct name or pronouns. Avoid lengthy apologies that focus additional attention on the person's pronouns.

Further questions can be directed to:

- Kristen Altenau Keen (kkeen1@udayton.edu), Assistant Dean of Students and Director of the Brook Center (for questions related to students)
- Anya Galli Robertson (agallirobertson1@udayton.edu), Assistant Professor of Sociology and Fellow for LGBTQ+ Inclusion (for questions related to faculty and staff)
- Equity Compliance Office 937-229-3622 (for specific concerns related to the [Non Discrimination and Anti-Harassment policy](#))

Resources adapted from the GLSEN Pronoun Guide.