

Accurately Representing Identity in University Data Systems: Collecting and Utilizing Chosen Name, Gender Identity, and Gender Pronouns

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Readers can access the policies referenced in this article on Lehigh University's website: Designating Gender Identity and Legal Sex (<https://provost.lehigh.edu/designating-gender-identity-and-legal-sex>) and Chosen Name Policy (<https://provost.lehigh.edu/chosen-name-policy>).

Abstract

Creating a welcoming community is key for an academic environment to thrive. This approach includes accurately representing community members' identities to understand their experiences, and establishing procedures for recording and utilizing individuals' names to support their ability to express their identities freely and without fear of discrimination. In this article we discuss a collaborative project undertaken at our university to begin collecting and storing expanded demographic information, specifically gender identity, chosen name (including diacritical marks), and pronouns. While these changes impact all populations, they are particularly important for the university's transgender population. We describe the working group that carried out this project and the policies developed to guide the group, the mechanisms established to collect the information, and the fields that were utilized in the system of record (i.e., Ellucian's Banner) to store the information. We also discuss the value gained because of this project, including increased inclusivity and the ability to use this information for reporting purposes, informing decisions, and improving the support and services offered to the community. Finally, we describe the challenges, barriers, security/privacy concerns, and successes that we encountered throughout the process and we offer recommendations for other institutions pursuing a similar goal.

Keywords: inclusivity in data, gender identity, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and others (LGBTQ+), data governance

INTRODUCTION

Creating a welcoming community is key for a thriving academic environment. This approach includes accurately representing community members' identities to understand their experiences (Becker et al., 2022), and establishing procedures for recording and utilizing individuals' names (Roberts et al., 2022) to support their ability to express their identities freely and without fear of discrimination (Lange, 2022). Failing to address changing needs in this area could result in negative experiences for community members (Flint et al., 2023), as was the case with a transgender graduate student attempting to enroll at our university. This individual student's experience was the catalyst for a cross-departmental collaborative project to store and collect expanded demographic information, specifically chosen names (including diacritical marks), gender identity, and gender pronouns.

After contextualizing our institution and the initial impetus behind this project, we describe our process for establishing mechanisms to collect this information and then to store it in our system of record, Ellucian's Banner (hereafter Banner; General v8.17/9.3.27.0.2 and BannerGeneralSSB v9.14.1). Throughout our discussion, we offer recommendations for other institutions that might be on a similar path; we highlight the aspects of our approach that worked well or could be improved, and we identify challenges encountered along the way. Finally, we describe how our university uses this information to inform decisions, and we describe the support services offered to our community.

BACKGROUND

Lehigh University is a private nonprofit research university located in eastern Pennsylvania.

Lehigh University is classified as a high-research doctoral university (R2). It was founded in 1865 as an all-male engineering school and became coeducational in the Fall of 1971. As our institution evolved, it became increasingly diverse. Lehigh University is now made up of five colleges, and is committed to enhancing diversity, inclusion, and equity in our campus community.

The impetus for our Chosen Name and Gender Identity Project began as a direct result of working alongside a transgender graduate student who was applying for admission to the university. While completing the application for admission, the student mentioned several harmful occurrences in the process that had caused them distress. These included a lack of ability to note any name aside from their legal name, as well as not being able to list their gender identity and/or gender pronouns. This student reached out to our Office of Enrollment Management Services, which oversees the processing of admissions and student data. This incident was the catalyst for the establishment of our Chosen Name and Gender Identity Working Group (hereafter working group). Broad systemic change can be slow and often lags culture. Although this group was established because of one student's negative experiences, we quickly realized that there was an important opportunity to bring about structural change that would impact several populations at Lehigh University, including undergraduate and graduate students, staff, and faculty.

For years, transgender students sought the ability to have their name accurately represented at Lehigh University to prevent use of their deadname, which

is their legal or previous name that is no longer used and should not be spoken or accessible to broader audiences. Attempts to accommodate a chosen name resulted in a few manual overrides with limited options as to what could be updated: our Banner database was not configured to store this information and send it to downstream applications or processes. As noted by several researchers, these cumbersome mechanisms place transgender college students at risk of academic disruption, while those students faced lower retention rates because of campus-based discrimination (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Flint et al., 2023; Goldberg, 2018). Literature suggests that having policies with follow-through and systems that support transgender college students leads to higher rates of academic success and enables more comfort in gender identity exploration for college students (Lange, 2022).

Through discussions with the Lehigh University Pride Center for Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (hereafter Pride Center), the importance of ensuring accurate data collection for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and others (LGBTQ+) population on campus became clear. Accurately representing community members' identities is key to understanding their experiences (Becker et al., 2022) and ensuring that they can express their identities freely and without fear of discrimination (Lange, 2022). It has historically been difficult to collect sexual orientation and gender identity data (Cross et al., 2023), however. Prior to the Chosen Name and Gender Identity Project, our institution collected sexual orientation and gender identity information, but only via demographic questions added to surveys that assessed the subjective experience of our campus community. The wording for these questions was provided by the Pride Center to ensure it reflected current terminology. The sexual orientation and gender

identity information gathered through these surveys was useful in understanding the experiences of the LGBTQ+ population on our campus and was utilized by the Pride Center to make programmatic and strategic decisions. The sexual orientation and gender identity information was collected only for the subset of people who completed the surveys, however, which meant it did not provide an accurate picture of the composition of our campus. Furthermore, this information was not integrated into our institutional data systems that housed other demographic and academic information, which limited our ability to use this information to understand student outcomes.

It also became clear that some individuals needed to use a chosen name for personal reasons. Some individuals use a shortened name or nickname, and some choose to be called by their middle name or a combination of the parts of their full name. At Lehigh University, some individuals shared that they use a professional name throughout their career that might not match their legal name. Additionally, some individuals in our international population prefer to be called by a Western or anglicized name (Ruzicka, 2018). Gender pronouns are another critical identity marker for many people: by enabling the identification and storing of gender pronouns in university systems, we are promoting accurate identity representation across campus while reducing the potential for harm to occur (Lange, 2022). For these reasons, our institution believed it was important to allow individuals to provide a chosen name that differs from their legal name, as well as to note their gender pronouns.

Relatedly, the importance of accurately recording names, including diacritical marks, became a priority. Our data stewards were engaged in conversations for several years about implementing the use of

diacritical marks in Banner in response to requests to allow diacritical marks to appear in names. Historically, our Banner database did not allow for the storage of diacritical marks in names due to interfacing with systems that cannot accommodate those characters. As the conversation about chosen names at our university started to gain traction, it became clear that implementing the use of diacritical marks would be another step toward inclusivity for individuals whose name contains a diacritical mark. The Data Governance and Standards Committee ultimately decided that these two initiatives (chosen name and diacritical marks) should be one project, since they both relate to the collection and storage of names. As Roberts et al. (2022) note, names are fundamental to our identity; the accurate use of a person's name conveys respect and affirms their individuality

1. INITIATION: CHOSEN NAME AND GENDER IDENTITY WORKING GROUP

The working group was established to guide a university-wide effort to collect and store expanded demographic information, namely chosen name (including diacritical marks), gender identity, and gender pronouns. The foundational and guiding goal of our working group was to establish a university environment where every member of our community is accurately represented in their name, gender identity, and pronouns across university databases without fear of having their incorrect personal information referenced and/or shared without their knowledge. Emerging from this overarching goal were several subgoals that developed over time. These included the establishment of two policies related to chosen name and gender

identity, determining the capabilities of Banner to store various forms of demographic information, and to account for the accurate population of demographic information in downstream applications that pull from our Banner database.

This group was initially convened by our vice provost of academic systems, who oversees the Office of Enrollment Management Services and the Office of the Registrar. Additional representation included human resources, library and technology services (our information technology unit), Office of the General Counsel, and the Pride Center. Members of the group were selected based on their expertise and level of interaction with individuals and their personal data across the university. Originally part of

the student affairs stem, and later reorganized under the diversity, inclusion, and equity stem, the Pride Center was a particularly important partner given its direct experience with end users and the Pride Center’s reporting lines. Additional units joined the working group in subsequent phases; see Figure 1 for an overview of the working group’s composition and priorities. Inclusion of human resources, library and technology services, the Office of Institutional Data, and the Office of the Provost were paramount, given the overlapping nature of various systems coupled with the database management function of each of these departments. The inclusion of the Office of the General Counsel, which helped to write and review the two university-wide policies, was also critical.

Figure 1. Chart Depicting the Working Group Priorities and Composition for Each Phase of the Project

	Phase 1 Initiation	Phase 2 Policy	Phase 3 Implementation	Phase 4 Maintenance
Priorities	Determine process and resources necessary to ensure appropriate collection and display of one's name and gender information across campus technology infrastructure	Establish policies to affirm commitment to inclusive practices and create accountability for project goals	Develop data management capabilities for collection and use of name and gender information across campus technology infrastructure	Continually enhance campus technology to ensure accurate display of name and gender information while troubleshooting challenges as they arise
Working Group Composition	Enrollment Management Services Human Resources Library & Technology Services Office of the General Counsel Pride Center	Development & Alumni Relations Enrollment Management Services Human Resources Library & Technology Services Office of the General Counsel Office of Institutional Data Office of the Registrar Pride Center	Enrollment Management Services Library & Technology Services Office of Institutional Data Office of the Registrar Pride Center	Enrollment Management Services Library & Technology Services Office of Institutional Data Office of the Registrar Pride Center

Our data governance program, overseen by our Office of Institutional Data, was utilized to manage the implementation phase of the project. This decision was made to leverage our established stewardship structure and the Data Governance and Standards Committee, both of which are used

for decision-making regarding changes to our data environment. The needs of this project are closely aligned with other data governance projects that we have successfully completed, which provided an opportunity for us to utilize our past learnings and apply them to this work.

2. POLICY: COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVITY

The working group began by proposing and adopting two new policies stating the university's commitment to inclusivity: one on gender identity (<https://provost.lehigh.edu/designating-gender-identity-and-legal-sex>) and one on chosen name (<https://provost.lehigh.edu/chosen-name-policy>).

Input for these policies and consultation throughout the project was provided by the Pride Center and its Trans and Non-binary Advocacy Committee. This committee included transgender and/or nonbinary students, staff, and faculty, and was consulted to ensure this project centered the voices of those who the project would most impact. These policies were instituted by the provost, the vice president of finance and administration, and the vice president for equity and community; the policies formalized the university's commitment to inclusive practices that create a welcoming and supportive culture for all on campus. They also laid out the expectations for collecting, maintaining, and sharing the data.

Formalized policies are one way to establish expectations for the university community and to create accountability among community members. They also provide visibility to a project and encourage follow through. By establishing the policies first, the working group would be able to move forward to the implementation stage with something to bolster the importance of the work and the need for change.

Once the policies were finalized and had been adopted, the work shifted to implementing procedures and other changes that would support the policies. While the policies established the *what* and the *why*, we needed to determine the *how*. This necessitated a change of the working group

members, since we needed help from different areas of expertise to implement the process changes. We knew a lot of the implementation work would be done in our university systems and technologies, so the working group makeup shifted to include more representatives from IT and fewer representatives with functional expertise.

3. IMPLEMENTATION: DATA MANAGEMENT

The implementation phase was led by the data governance project team, which is a partnership between data governance and enterprise systems (i.e., IT). The working group met on a recurring basis every 3 weeks and maintained an ongoing agenda for more than 2 years. The agendas consisted of status updates on outstanding tasks as well as new issues that needed to be discussed. This meeting frequency allowed members of the working group to make progress without stagnating. The data governance and IT project team held additional separate meetings to work through specific tasks and issues that did not require attendance of the full working group.

Using Banner as our institution's system of record meant it was essential that these data elements could be stored and maintained there. In addition, we have many other third-party applications in use at our institution. The priority of the working group was to implement the use of chosen names and gender identity in Banner, after which we would work to disseminate information as appropriate to our other tools. Additional considerations were necessary before this information could be stored in Banner, discussed below.

Storage of Chosen Name Information

In Banner, we had previously stored the Full Legal Name, Preferred First Name, and Previously Known By names in the *IDEN forms (Person Identification forms: SPAIDEN, PPAIDEN, and APAIDEN). While the Preferred First Name field had potential to represent chosen name, Lehigh University's chosen name policy includes the ability to designate a chosen middle name and a chosen last name, so the Preferred First Name field was able to hold only one part of the name. Therefore, we decided to leverage the ability to have multiple name types on a person's record that would allow a unique first, middle, and last name, if the person desired. To do so, new name types were created in the Name Type Validation (GTVNTYP) table to allow us to designate the different names that could be assigned to an individual in the *IDEN forms (Person Identification forms). Since we were also encompassing the use of diacritical marks into this implementation, the working group determined there would be four name types to allow for the storage of both a legal name and a chosen name with diacritical marks, and a legal and a chosen name without diacritical marks. This approach allowed us to accurately represent individuals' names while also storing names without diacritical marks so that we could accommodate the limitations of some third-party tools and systems that receive these data and are not able to accept diacritical marks. The four name types created were as follows:

- 1| Legal Name with Diacritical Marks
- 2| Legal Name without Diacritical Marks
- 3| Chosen Name with Diacritical Marks
- 4| Chosen Name without Diacritical Marks

Since the Preferred First Name field had been in use for a long time, there was information populated in this field for many employees. The working group made the decision to load the Preferred First Name data into the new Chosen First Name field on behalf of users who had previously supplied a Preferred First Name. We made sure to inform the campus community of this data load.

While everyone has a legal name in our Banner database, not everyone has a chosen name in their record. To address this, IT altered an Ellucian-provided database function called F_FORMAT_NAME (Banner Name Function) to pass in a name type so that it could be used in reporting and in integrations.¹ The altered Banner Name Function returns a name based on the end user's needs. For example, if chosen names are preferred, the end user passes in the chosen name parameter and the result displays the chosen name if one exists, but defaults to legal name if no chosen name exists. Only approved departmental staff (e.g., data scientists, data analysts, system managers, and report writers) and IT staff have access to this database function.

Storage of Gender Identity and Pronouns

Prior to the announcement of the policies, fields had recently been made available in Banner for the other demographic information that we wanted to collect. Legal Sex, Gender Designation, and Personal Pronouns existed in Banner in the Biographical Information section of a person's record. At Lehigh University, we were utilizing only Legal Sex until the new policies were implemented. All three fields are drop-down fields that do not allow for custom

1 . Please contact Casey Gogno at cap211@lehigh.edu for details about this function.

text entry. Therefore, to start using the Gender Designation (GTVGNDR) and Personal Pronoun (GTVPPRN) tables, we needed to designate the valid values that would serve as options in the drop-down menus of our data collection processes.

Determining the Values for Validation Tables

To designate the valid values, the working group discussed possible values while following the guidance and expertise of our Pride Center. Our Pride Center director provided guidance based on their education in the field and knowledge of our student population. They provided a list of gender identities and pronouns that they recommended we

include in the drop-downs on the intake forms (see Table 1 for these values). The list of gender identities was generated by examining gender identity options on other university surveys and through consultation with the Trans and Non-Binary Advocacy Committee. Due to Banner restrictions and concerns about data quality, we were unable to allow for self-reporting of gender identity using an open text field. We also were unable to utilize a separate field to allow for self-reporting of transgender identity status. Given these limitations, the team decided to move forward with the option to list transgender and cisgender identity status as options within the drop-down menu. Our intent is to continue exploring the addition of a transgender status question to decouple this it from one’s gender identity selection.

Table 1. Values Available in Gender Identity and Pronoun Tables in Banner

Gender Identity Values (GTVGNDR: Gender Designation)	Pronoun Values (GTVPPRN: Personal Pronoun)
Agender	He/Him/His
Gender Fluid	He/They
Gender Non-Conforming	Not Listed
Genderqueer	Prefer not to disclose
Man (Cisgender)	She/Her/Hers
Man (Transgender)	She/They
Non-Binary	They/Them/Their
Not Listed	Ze/Hir/Hir
Prefer not to disclose	Ze/Zim/Zir
Woman (Cisgender)	
Woman (Transgender)	

Once the proposed list of valid values was established, we utilized the existing data governance process that is followed whenever we make a change to the Banner database. The Data Governance and Standards Committee, made up of data stewards, data managers, and other representatives from campus departments, circulates a proposed change within each unit to identify possible impacts. Once these findings have been shared with the committee, the proposed change is brought to a vote to determine whether the work will move forward. This process is followed for changes such as the creation of new fields and the addition or removal of valid values from a validation table, as was the case with the gender identity and pronoun values.

After the working group and the Data Governance and Standards Committee had reviewed and approved the proposed values for the validation tables, our IT department updated the validation tables in Banner. It was also agreed on by the Data Governance and Standards Committee and other campus partners that these values would be used on all intake forms as our standard list in a drop-down field. This ensured that data would flow smoothly and without error into Banner from third-party applications where it was collected. We established that the validation tables would be reviewed on an annual basis to determine if changes need to be made based on the needs of our community. The next step of the implementation was to determine how to collect the information, ideally at the earliest point of contact with all our populations.

Data Collection for New Community Members

Once there was a place to store the chosen names, gender identity, and pronouns, we made changes to our intake forms to collect the information at the earliest point of contact with someone. Intake forms include employment applications, onboarding forms, and admission applications. In the past, there were multiple versions of employee intake forms used across our campus, which were inconsistent in the information they collected. By creating a standard employee intake form used for all employee hiring, we streamlined the data collection and ensured it was consistent and occurred at the earliest point of contact with new employees. There are also separate admission applications in use by undergraduate and graduate admissions; we worked to make sure they were consistent.

Data Collection for Current Community Members

For current community members who would not have the opportunity to complete a new intake form, we created a Google Form that they can complete at any time to update their chosen name information (see Appendix for form details). The Google Form submission is routed to the appropriate office based on the type of record that needs to be updated (student, faculty, or staff member). The Google Form is intended as a temporary solution until we can create an automated process that will update the name directly in Banner with no manual data entry required. It should be noted that an automated process is preferable to the Google Form procedure due to the limitations and potential for error associated with manual data entry. We have experienced both delays and errors in data entry, likely due to the reliance on manual intervention.

Gender identity and pronouns for current community members can be updated by the individual using the Self-Service Banner application. This is where other biographical and demographic information can be updated by an individual; it was logical to enable these two fields there. We also created a link within the Self-Service Banner application that will direct the individual to the Google Form to update their chosen name if they wish to do so. The goal was to have as few places as possible where biographical and demographic information is updated. We wanted to make the process as user friendly as possible, requiring little navigation between forms.

Review of Chosen Names

There were some conversations within the working group regarding the review and approval of chosen names that were submitted through the forms. Ultimately, we decided we would not require an immediate review of every chosen name submitted. Instead, we opted to do a regular review of all chosen name changes to ensure there is no abuse of the system. This decision was made to reduce both barriers to access and the potential for bias. Lehigh University also has policies and procedures in place outlining expectations of community members in selecting a chosen name. In particular, our student code of conduct outlines the expectations of respectful conduct and prohibits intentional furnishing of false information to the university. If a student should choose to submit an inappropriate name as their chosen name, they would be subject to our disciplinary procedures following a violation of the code of conduct.

Context-Based Selection of Appropriate Name Type

We had to make decisions internally about whether a tool or process would use chosen names or legal names, subject to its capabilities. We intended for a chosen name to be the default name displayed in all cases unless a legal name is necessary for a legitimate purpose, which meant that we had to identify the requirements of each tool or process and determine whether chosen names could be used. For example, there are some processes that require the use of legal names without diacritical marks, including those in which the government requires that information exactly match their records (e.g., tax-related data sent to the IRS such as W-2, W-4, 1099, etc.). Other examples include our study-abroad program for travel documentation and our benefits vendors, such as insurance carriers. In those cases, there was a legitimate need to utilize a legal name, and it was determined that the chosen name would not be loaded.

Some of our third-party tools have a student-facing portal where students are greeted by name and can see their own personal information upon logging in. In these instances, in particular, we believed it was of utmost importance to load chosen names so the student sees the information they provided to us. For chosen names to display in our third-party applications, integrations, reporting, and other processes, we first identified the requirements of each tool or process and determined whether chosen names could be used for their purposes.

Database Capabilities and Integration of Third-Party Tools

There are many third-party tools and integrations in use at our institution. The Enterprise Systems group was tasked with reaching out to the vendors we work with to determine abilities and limitations of the tool to accept diacritical marks, chosen name, and gender identity information. In cases where this information should be incorporated but a tool was not able to do so, the Enterprise Systems group requested enhancements from our vendors; the group also continues to monitor any new releases for adverse impacts on these updates. If it was determined that the tool could accept these data points, that group made any provisions necessary to integrate the data from Banner to the tool.

We also worked with student service departments that utilize kiosks or machines to sign into a queue to assist students. We found that, in some locations, students had to sign in using their student ID number, but the kiosk or queue would display their legal name. In instances such as those, our IT department worked with the student service department and the kiosk vendor to determine how the student's personal information was being loaded, and would then update the data feed to utilize the chosen name instead of the legal name.

Our institution utilizes several reporting platforms/tools that use Banner data to generate reports; there are many users who can write reports or generate new versions of existing reports. With the use of the new name types, IT worked to inventory the existing reports and update the field that was used for names. IT also trained users on how to select the appropriate name for future reporting. Even with this proactive approach, it is an ongoing process to update older reports that still inaccurately reference legal names as we become aware of them.

4. MAINTENANCE: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Upon completion of the main objectives of the project, the working group made the decision to classify the project as complete and to move into a maintenance phase. There were still items to troubleshoot and incidents being raised, but it was no longer necessary to continue the regular meeting schedule. Instead, the working group reconvenes when necessary and small groups continue to meet as needed to troubleshoot problems, reassess technology capabilities, and work on enhancements and wish list items. As we continue to seek feedback from individuals who are impacted by these processes, we anticipate new opportunities for improvement over time, and are prepared to continue refining our practices.

There is also still work to be done to educate our users. We anticipate the development of further training and documentation to meet these needs. Documentation and communication have been vital throughout all phases of this project and continue to be at the forefront of the maintenance phase.

Documentation

Throughout the project, the working group ensured that documentation was updated and available to our campus community; the working group was thus able to promote transparency in this process. The documentation included instructions on how to update personal information, as well as a page specifically used to track the locations where people could expect the chosen name to display, based on the completed work on the third-party integrations. This page provided transparency of the progress being made.

Data definitions were also created in our institutional data dictionary to define relevant terms: chosen name, gender identity, sex, and pronouns. The definitions include information on where these data are stored in our Banner database. The definitions also designate the appropriate data classification, which determines who can access the data, where it can be stored, whether it can be shared, and whether it is protected as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) data. At Lehigh University, the decision was made to classify the chosen name as directory information under FERPA. Our policy already considered a name to be directory information, and we decided to clarify that both legal name and chosen name were considered directory information. Based on this decision, both name types can be shared without prior permission of the student unless they choose to limit its disclosure. Conversely, gender identity and pronouns are classified as restricted data and can be shared only with school officials who have a legitimate educational interest, as defined by FERPA. In addition to the definitions, there is also documentation on how to utilize the Banner Name Function, for those in a more technical role who might need to use it.²

The importance of documentation cannot be stressed enough. Since this project has spanned nearly 3 years, there are often questions raised that have been addressed previously. With the limitations of collective knowledge, our documentation and notes provide reminders, and allow us to get efficient answers when needed. The documentation also allows us to track our wish list of future enhancements or tasks that did not get finished to make sure we do not lose sight of things.

Communication to Campus Community and Project Stakeholders

Throughout this process, communication was an integral part of our efforts, and was essential to the success of the project. Communication was necessary throughout all steps of the project: to educate the campus community on the new policies, to announce the ability to collect and store this information, to announce updates as the team worked to update third-party tools, and to educate and train users. It was essential to communicate with our campus community about the progress that was made.

Methods of communication included mass emails to the campus community, updates to our web pages, and presentations given to the campus community. We also provided ongoing updates at our data governance committees' meetings; those committees are made up of representatives from departments across campus who are responsible for disseminating information to their units and facilitating ongoing communication. We relied on our data stewards to provide input into decision-making for this project based on their subject matter expertise. We requested ongoing feedback and worked to create open communication to ensure that concerns and questions were addressed throughout the implementation phase.

Over time, as awareness spread on campus about the utilization of chosen names, gender identities, and pronouns, the working group has been able to have more discussions with departments about their third-party tools and whether any updates have been made to accommodate the use of these fields. Through these conversations, it was clear that insufficient communication would be detrimental to

2 . Please contact Casey Gogno at cap211@lehigh.edu for details about this function.

the project as well as to our diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts on campus. We are working to create open and repetitive communication to educate our campus community about the importance of utilizing this information in a way that is beneficial to all.

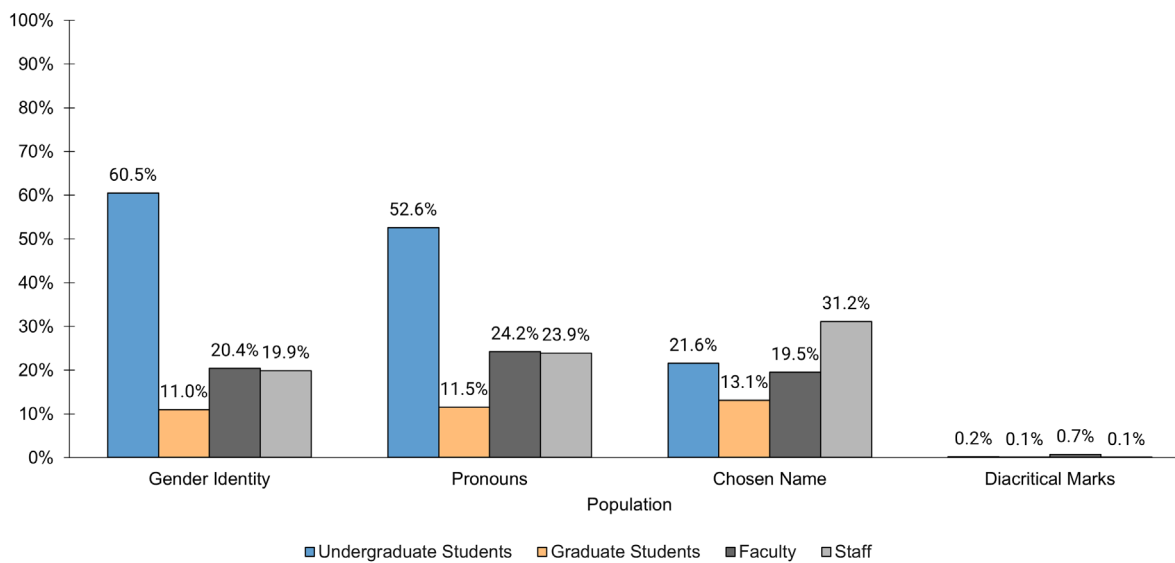
Outcomes and Impact

COMMUNITY UTILIZATION

Utilization of these new fields is increasing across our entire community, although it is strongest among those joining our campus most recently. Among the most recent incoming undergraduate class (Fall 2023; 1,531 students), 98% provided information about their gender identity, 96% identified their pronouns, 16% supplied a chosen

name that differed from their legal first, middle, or last name, and 0.5% had a name containing diacritical marks. Utilization of these fields is lower across the whole undergraduate student body, however, and is lowest for graduate students (see Figure 2 for utilization rates across all populations). Utilization of these fields by faculty and staff, the populations with the longest tenure at our institution, is notable. In the most recent employee census (Fall 2023; 681 faculty, 1,316 staff), 20% of faculty and staff provided information about gender identity; 24% of faculty and staff identified pronouns; 20% of faculty and 31% of staff supplied a chosen name that differed from their legal first, middle, or last name; and 0.7% of faculty and 0.1% of staff had a name containing diacritical marks.

Figure 2. Utilization of New Fields by Undergraduate Students, Graduate Students, Faculty, and Staff as of Fall 2023 Census



SYSTEM UTILIZATION

These fields are now being utilized in university systems, databases, and processes (e.g., course rosters, housing rosters, and student advising platforms). Specific areas of impact for individuals with a chosen name include greetings in mass/custom emails, ID cards, course rosters for both faculty names and student names, learning management software, and self-service portals. When new technologies are implemented, our practices now include an evaluation of whether the legal name is required; if not, the chosen name is utilized.

VALUE TO CAMPUS COMMUNITY MEMBERS

We have received positive feedback from students, staff, and faculty about the impact of these new capabilities. In an annual end-of-year survey administered by the Pride Center, several transgender student respondents noted that the ability to update personal demographic information across university databases has made them feel safer and more valued as a member of the Lehigh community. This is especially important for our transgender students who are now interacting with various platforms that used to be a source of harm. For example, prior to our efforts, there was no ability to update the display name on campus computers upon logging in to the device. This was like our learning management system where students would be outed simply by way of their discussion board posts being associated with their legal name. The risk of being outed is particularly dangerous for transgender students for various reasons. Allowing people the opportunity not only to update demographic information but also to do so in the easiest and least obstructive way is paramount to promoting a safe and healthy campus climate for LGBTQ+ populations. This safety can go a long way

in supporting students' academic and co-curricular pursuits (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Flint et al., 2023). Similar feedback has been shared by staff and faculty. Specifically, several staff and faculty have noted that they appreciate the ability to provide more-comprehensive demographic information and that they value the flexibility in specifying their first, middle, and last names to accommodate their personal and professional preferences. These practices support community members' autonomy by giving them the power to choose how their identities are represented.

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND REPORTING

In addition to enhancing the climate on our campus, the initiatives described in this article are beneficial to our institutional research function. System-wide collection and storage of gender identity has been especially useful for institutional research analyses, external reporting, and data literacy efforts.

A key element of the institutional research function on our campus is assessing the subjective experiences of our campus community members through self-report surveys. To derive meaning from survey data and support an equitable campus climate, we need to differentiate and contrast the responses of community members from various social groups. Prior to our university-wide collection of gender identity, we asked survey respondents to provide their gender identity via additional questions in each survey. Now we can bring gender identity in along with other demographic information housed in our data systems and no longer must ask respondents to provide this information each time they complete a survey. This reduces the number of survey questions, which helps mitigate survey fatigue and improves the quality of the survey data that we collect.

Another key element of institutional research is examining potential disparities in student outcomes such as retention and graduation rates. The system-wide collection and storage of gender identity allows us to include it alongside other demographic indicators like legal sex and race/ethnicity in analyses of student outcomes. A more complete picture of student identities allows us to better identify and address any disparities in student outcomes.

While having gender identity information available in data systems is useful for institutional research and reporting, it is imperative to consider the safeguards necessary for ensuring privacy and confidentiality when reporting this sensitive information. Privacy considerations are especially important because they pertain to populations with identities that are often minoritized and stigmatized. The expanded values available to represent gender identity within a relatively small campus mean that there are likely to be few people who identify with some gender identity values. Reporting information for a small group of people poses the risk that their identity could be ascertained, and their privacy violated. On our campus we found that it is often necessary to group some gender identities for aggregate reporting with large enough group sizes to protect individuals' identity. This must be done, however, with great care to avoid further minoritizing and othering those with gender identities that put them in smaller group sizes.

The capacity to report nonbinary gender identity is becoming increasingly relevant for external reporting. Beginning in the 2022–2023 data collection, for example, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) asks institutions to indicate whether they collect data on nonbinary genders (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). It is likely that rankings and other external

reporting requirements will place increasing emphasis on institutions' ability to provide gender identity apart from binary legal sex.

DATA LITERACY

One secondary yet important impact of this project is the contribution it has made to data literacy on our campus, including promoting competence as it relates to technical considerations as well as inclusivity. As one of the more recent large-scale projects of this nature, this project relied on the data literacy foundation that we have cultivated, and provided an opportunity for us to establish a framework of how data literacy can be supported in our community of data users. Our efforts to collect, store, and appropriately utilize gender identity, pronouns, and chosen name information highlighted the importance of providing communication and training to data users at multiple points across the institution. A lack of understanding of the data poses the risk of improper use or mishandling. It is critical to educate those who interact with data at all levels, including the individual provider of the information, the person entering the data, the developers supporting the tool housing the data, and those who use the data in reporting or other processes. Data literacy is enhanced as awareness is built about what data are collected and why, as well as how they are used and shared.

Furthermore, the collection and availability of gender identity, pronouns, and chosen name information creates opportunities to educate the campus on inclusivity. For example, having access to gender identity in our institutional data systems has opened the door for our institutional research team to have conversations about gender identity when we receive ad hoc requests for data. When a request comes in for head counts by gender, for example,

we can talk with the requester to confirm that they are aware of the difference between gender identity and binary sex, then guide them in determining the dimension that is most relevant to their request. Through these conversations we can educate our constituents and improve their awareness of identities as they intersect with data, ultimately supporting inclusivity across our campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Challenges and risks are inherent when executing any project of this magnitude. Without strategies to successfully address them, these potential limitations can be barriers to more-inclusive practices. In the following sections, we discuss the challenges and limitations that we encountered and believe would be beneficial for other institutions to consider. We offer recommendations for navigating these potential barriers based on the key lessons we learned along the way. Finally, we describe our ongoing efforts to maintain and improve the processes we have established. Our hope is that, in sharing the insights we gained on this journey, the work of other institutions pursuing a similar path will be bolstered.

Challenges and Limitations

Throughout the project, we encountered numerous challenges that often required complex and creative problem-solving. The biggest challenges overall were the limitations of our Banner database and third-party tools to accommodate the use of chosen names and diacritical marks. The investigation into possibilities was time consuming due to the decentralized management of software tools on our campus. Additionally, the communication with vendors and subsequent testing of technological

changes contributed to long wait times before changes could be implemented. The nature of this project, particularly related to the widespread use of names across systems, makes this work extremely sensitive and prone to error. If the entry process must be manual, institutions should administer proper user training to reduce the risk of error. We were cautious and deliberate about evaluating and changing procedures that involved names. It is imperative to be cognizant of the risk of breakdowns in systems and processes if they were not set up to accurately handle updated demographic information.

Due to the widespread use of demographic information, decision-making and communication was another limitation that challenged our efforts. Numerous employees are responsible for the data entry of this information, and even more employees can view and utilize these data in their work, and can often rely on the accuracy of these data for their duties. Making decisions about the implementation of these fields was a challenge due to the number of users who must be consulted. We relied on our existing data governance structure and recommend other institutions consider doing the same, if possible.

Another challenge of this project was the pace at which it moved, a pace that is common in other data governance work. Being intentional with a focus on long-term sustainability should be at the forefront of rolling out a change to data collection processes such as this. Patience is critical and we believed it was important to communicate clear expectations to the community that this will take time. We continually provided updates as progress was made so our constituents were reminded of the project and informed of new information in a timely manner. The work on the policies that established the goals of our project started in 2020 and the policies were announced in the Fall 2021

semester. The working group continued regular meetings through May 2023, at which time the project was considered largely closed. However, the working group continues to receive reports of issues and requests for improvements. For institutions embarking on a project such as this, setting expectations for the project's pace and completion of implementation would be prudent. It is important to expect multiple iterations and plan for ongoing continuous improvement.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that resources and capacity are an important limitation that other institutions may encounter. In carrying out this project, we relied extensively on the data governance infrastructure already established at our university and the capacity available in our institutional research office. The time and effort required to see a project like this through could be a significant limitation for institutions that do not have this infrastructure or capacity available.

Key Lessons Learned

We recommend that the management of a project of this scope be overseen by a central entity, if possible. In Lehigh University's case, it was logical to utilize the established structure and decision-making processes in our data governance program to carry out the implementation phase. Due to the numerous departments and individuals involved, it was extremely helpful to have an organized method by which the status of tasks was managed. A centralized entity, such as a data governance program, can aid in the inclusion of the appropriate individuals for feedback and communication throughout the process. Leveraging a stewardship structure, as well as constituents who are already familiar with the nature of data governance work, was instrumental in efficient implementation.

Communication and feedback are other critical elements that contributed to the success of this project. When making a change to the collection, storage, and use of data points that are as impactful as someone's name, it is critical to communicate at all levels—from the individual provider of the data to the user of the data. It is important for individuals to understand what data we are collecting, why we are asking for it, and how their data will be used and shared. Subsequently, users of this information must be trained and educated on the appropriate use of these data. Inadequate communication and education, on both the subject matter at large and the project itself, could result in misuse or unintentional harm by those who have access to the information. The importance of communication cannot be stressed enough.

The working group relied heavily on user reports of incidents where their information was not appearing correctly. Specifically, we created a Google Form in which users could report incidents of their deadname appearing somewhere unexpected. This allowed us to follow a breadcrumb trail to the source where the incorrect name was being used. For example, many departments on campus utilize their own mass email tool. They either pull lists of email addresses from reporting tools, or have a report sent to them. In many cases, a student would submit a deadname incident report in which someone sent a mass email with their deadname in the greeting. As the working group investigated these incidents, we learned that departments were often using an old version of a report that was retrieving legal names instead of chosen names. We used these incidents as opportunities to educate our data users about the new ability to utilize chosen names instead, and the importance of doing so.

It is also useful to maintain an inventory of systems and tools in use on campus. This was helpful for us to track the ability of systems to accommodate the new fields and make notes on the status of updates. An inventory of applications that integrate with our student information system will be essential for other projects and investigations in the future. We also recommend maintaining an inventory of data collection methods (intake forms) such as employment/hiring forms, admission applications, and other methods used to collect data from new entities that will interact with the institution. An inventory will make it easier to identify items that need to be updated if future changes must be made to the data management process again.

The working group also learned about the risks for negative impact that a project like this can have on some populations. For example, we were informed that, in some cases, individuals in our international community felt pressured to provide a chosen name when they received our communications. Here it is important to consider intention versus impact: they interpreted the communication as a strong suggestion to provide a chosen name, whereas our intention was to allow users to provide a chosen name if they wished to do so. We did not anticipate this issue, and were grateful that a campus partner brought it to our attention. Additionally, we discovered that some users provided a nickname that they go by but ultimately did not want to appear across systems and practices because they believed their legal name was more professional and/or appropriate for official use. Other institutions embarking on a project of this nature should consider differing expectations across populations.

Finally, we found it immensely helpful to include representation and input from constituents impacted by these policies (e.g., students, faculty,

staff) to ensure that we had a strong understanding of needs and impact. Since this project had implications that extended far beyond our working group members, it was helpful to hear a variety of perspectives to inform our understanding of needs and impact. We were able to learn about individuals' experience of the process downstream and to receive ideas for improvement to the user experience. The suggestions we have received for improvement have also highlighted the need for a continual feedback loop process.

Future Directions and Ongoing Improvement

It is critical to be agile and responsive when implementing new processes and shifting campus expectations regarding data management. Our extensive process revealed several additional recommendations for our group to consider as the project continually evolves to meet the needs of our campus constituents. Some of the work that is ongoing includes discussion around FERPA standards, data access, privacy regulations, and automated process implementation. We are working to investigate the need for access to these data in our current security privileges, and potentially refine what is made available based on a user's role. We also plan to create additional guidance, for end users and the campus community in general, which will outline the general principles that should be followed when accessing and utilizing these data.

We note that utilization of these new fields is lowest among graduate students, an often-overlooked population. While we undertook efforts specifically targeting undergraduate and faculty/staff utilization of these fields, we are still working toward reaching our graduate student body. Methods to reach the graduate population will be reviewed, including

considering which approaches that work for other populations will also work for graduate students, and where there are unique opportunities to communicate with graduate students.

We also learned that often technology lags culture. While there has been a culture of progressive thought regarding data management at Lehigh University, we found that we are sometimes limited by database capabilities. For example, during the implementation phase we were restricted to displaying 11 values in our gender identity category in the Self-Service Banner application. Since it would be ideal to allow unlimited values to be added to the drop-down field for future additions, we submitted an enhancement request to Ellucian; that change was completed during the maintenance phase of the project.

Additionally, it would be preferable to have the ability to identify transgender identity status separately from gender identity. Currently, our gender identity values include the ability to note transgender identity status within the gender identity category, such as Man (Transgender) and Man (Cisgender). This is not ideal since transgender identity should be decoupled from gender identity—a transgender man is a man, just as a cisgender man is a man. Conflating the gender identity and transgender identity status may pressure community members to out themselves in an undesirable way. At present, our university does not have a means to collect the transgender identity separately from the gender identity due to limitations in Banner, but we are investigating this enhancement.

The working group is exploring the collection of information about sexual orientation from those who feel comfortable providing it. Doing so would further expand our ability to represent the identities of our community members. This would aid us in tracking the outcomes of our LGBTQ+ population and better support their success at our institution.

We are also discussing opportunities for community members to share their chosen name in some places and not in others. This will require ongoing dialogue because the technological capabilities to specify which name will appear in different places are limited and would be quite cumbersome to utilize. These considerations are in response to feedback that we have received from students requesting that their chosen name be updated across campus systems but not printed on mail that could be sent to their home address. Students do not want to be outed at home if they have not disclosed a new name to their family.

We continue to work toward addressing concerns that the risk of human error will unintentionally cause harm to certain populations (e.g., outing someone's transgender identity). It is critical to determine which users or offices have access to the different name types and gender identity information, and ensure that those users or offices receive comprehensive training on appropriate use of this information. Consideration and education about the potential human impact will help to ensure that all members of our campus community feel safe accessing resources and that they feel supported by every academic and administrative office on campus.

CONCLUSION

What began as a response to address the negative experience of one transgender student applying to our university evolved into a multiyear cross-departmental coordinated effort to expand the demographic information utilized at our institution. The ability to store and collect chosen names (including diacritical marks), gender identity, and gender pronouns represents a structural change to our data management practices that supports an inclusive campus climate. These improvements affect all populations at our university but are especially impactful for transgender students; these students perform better academically and feel safer in their overall college experience when institutions implement policies that honor their identities (Flint et al., 2023; Lange, 2022).

While improving inclusivity in data practices is undoubtedly important work, it poses challenges that can be difficult to navigate. We believe that the following recommendations are key to improving inclusivity in data practices:

- 1| Ideally, large-scale data inclusivity projects should be overseen by a central entity.
- 2| Input from constituents directly impacted is key, including feedback loops that provide avenues for reporting inconsistencies and potential negative impacts.
- 3| Intentional communication is critical—both to constituents and among units contributing to this work.
- 4| Maintenance of an inventory of systems and tools used on campus is useful for ensuring changes are implemented across an entire campus.
- 5| Education on the appropriate use, handling, and meaning of data elements in data inclusivity projects is crucial, due to the sensitive nature of this information.

By sharing our process, its impact, and our recommendations for navigating this work and its challenges, we hope that other institutions can use this knowledge in their journey to promote inclusivity on their campuses.

APPENDIX

Chosen Name Update Form

Instructions

Please complete the form below to update your chosen name in applicable Lehigh University databases.

Additionally, we have updated the university's Banner system to allow for the storage of diacritical marks, also known as special characters in names (i.e., the first "é" in Renée). If your chosen name includes a special character, please include that in your name below.

Please note, if you have already submitted a "Preferred First Name" via Self-Service Banner, this name has been added to the new chosen first name field with your legal last name. Should you wish to update that name and/or your middle and last name, please complete the form below.

If you are interested in submitting a legal name change to the university, you can learn more about that process here:

<http://go.lehigh.edu/UpdatePersonalInfoHowTo>

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact the Pride Center for Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity at pridecenter@Lehigh.edu and/or the Chosen Name Gender Identity Working Group at datagovernance@Lehigh.edu

Form Fields and descriptions

(*asterisks denote required fields):

Email*:

ID*:

Institutional email*:

Primary role at institution*:

Chosen First Name (if this this not identified, your legal first name will continue to be used in Lehigh University databases):

Chosen Last Name (if this this not identified, your legal last name will continue to be used in Lehigh University databases):

Would you like a new ID card? If you select yes, more information will be sent to you via email.

Please note: in some contexts, you may be asked to provide your Lehigh ID card. If a legal form of identification is required, your Lehigh University ID card will not suffice. We encourage you to carry a legal form of identification (such as a driver's license) should that be needed.

Yes No

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