Personal Identity in People Soft and Related Institutional Data Systems

The University of Rhode Island has long recognized that personal identity, gender identity and individual self-expression are important facets of an inclusive and equitable community. The time has come to have our institutional data systems reflect these same principles.

Two aspects of our institutional data systems need adjustment in this regard – the use of names and pronouns.

Name[1]

- The term "Name" and all related modifiers (first, middle, last, prefixes and suffixes) should be used in all situations where the individual can set these values at will. The term "Legal Name" and all related modifiers should be used when the legal name is required and should not generally appear in any other IT context.
- Both the legal name and name should be collected and entered into our institutional systems as early as possible – in the case of students at the time of application and for employees and affiliates at the time of application or other first entry into our data systems.
- The individual should have the ability to set these names at will at any time and have names reflect into all URI data systems as automatically as possible.

Implementing these principles in practice will take considerable effort and require both technical changes to our data systems and displays as well as our business processes and practices.

Pronouns

- An individual at URI shall have the ability to use pronouns of their choosing in all institutional data systems to the extent these systems support such entry.
- As with names, pronouns should be collected at first contact with URI and entered into the appropriate data system, from where they should cascade to all other data systems.
- In cases where only pre-defined lists are available, the members of the IT community will work with appropriate non-IT groups on campus to help define these lists and allow every member of the URI community to select and change these at will.
- Wherever possible, the preferred pronouns shall be used in all correspondence, reference, or other use.

Implementing this change will also require considerable effort for both technical implementation and business process. This area is also technically evolving, for example our core data systems currently have the ability to store pronouns, but the use and display of these is still evolving.

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[1] It is worth noting that while names have recently come up as they relate to gender identity, the need for individuals to be able to specify their own name extends well beyond. For example, an individual with the legal name "Mary Louise Smith" may prefer to use the name "Liz Smith" or may have be known professionally as "Liz D'Amardo" and prefer to use that name as their professional identity.