

Assigning Names to University Entities

Summary

This policy provides for an orderly and informed practice of assigning names to entities within the campus Entity/Hierarchy system.

Policy Statement

The campus Entity/Hierarchy (E/H) system maintains the official collection of elements (entities) used by the institution to conduct its operations. Entities may reference organizational elements such as academic units or functional elements such as student majors and are used within all major UB systems to provide a means to consistently identify, process and summarize activity across the campus. Strict adherence to entity naming convention is crucial to maintaining the integrity, accuracy and quality of university information stores.

Entity naming will generally follow conventions specified in existing University at Buffalo policy document "Naming Standards":

- Entity names must reflect as closely as possible the functional or structural associations referenced under that moniker.
- Entity names should be succinct and concise and fashioned so as not to create confusion with any existing entity under the UB umbrella. Names should explicitly describe the entity's relationship to the university. In particular, for academic units they should reference the name officially listed in formation documents such as "Department of", "Center for," "institute" or similarly descriptive noun; officially-recognized student organizations should reference "club," "group," "team," "chapter," etc.
- Entity names should be respectful of and should not include other copyrighted names or phrases either within or beyond the copyrighted assets of the university.
- Gratuitous use of "UB" in lieu of the phrase "you be," such as UB Learnin' or UB Safe, is categorically not permitted.
- When beginning the development of an entity name, the requesting individual should not begin with a desired acronym and engineer a name to fit. This often results in strained and confusing names that sacrifice clarity and meaning for "creativity." Similarly, in an acronym-inclined culture, the requestor should be cognizant of a desired name's acronym to avoid embarrassing or inappropriate acronyms (e.g., "Academic Support Services" or "School of Law").
- Entity names should not include exponents, subscripts or superscripts, unnecessary articles (e.g., "The") or punctuation, nor any other character that is not a letter or number.

The following conventions will also be applied:

- Acronyms should generally be avoided within an entity name unless their meaning is likely to be understood by most publics without clarification (ex. BS/MBA) or are part of a specific branding campaign (ex. UB MD).
- Entity names should not be prefaced with a gratuitous abbreviation unless the entity is associated with an element that is common to more than one department or office (ex. SDM Deans Office).
- Requests to include an abbreviation to support common elements will be evaluated for appropriate fit, clarity, and potential for misunderstanding.
- Academic department name creation or changes will be formally reviewed by the Faculty Senate (per Faculty Senate Charter, Article II: Powers and Duties of the Faculty Senate, Section C.2 University-Wide Matters re: academic unit renaming).

Naming Review and Approval

- The Office of Institutional Analysis (OIA) is the designated Data Trustee and Steward for all entity information and is the sole office responsible for maintaining both the contents of the system and organizational structure it represents.
- All requests to create, update and retire entities will be forwarded to OIA employee Laura Szeffel using lszeffel@buffalo.edu via completion of the appropriate form located at: <https://www.buffalo.edu/provost/oia/entity-hierarchy.html>
- OIA will evaluate requests to ensure compliance with the standards listed in this policy document. Where a divergence is evident OIA will work with the requesting office to develop an acceptable alternative.

Background

Entity/Hierarchy (E/H) is the official system of record for elements used by the institution to conduct its many operations. These elements comprise two distinct types; structural and functional. Structural elements are used to develop an organizational representation of UB's many units, departments, offices and centers. Functional elements identify objects used by these organizations to conduct their operations (ex. student majors, course subjects, research space and financial accounts).

Individual elements are termed "entities" and are represented within E/H by a unique 4-digit number. The entity number is assigned sequentially by the system and contains no special intelligence about the element it represents. Each entity is also assigned a unique hierarchy number. The hierarchy number is a 10-digit number with each sequential 2-digit grouping generally identifying major campus Vice President/Provost Areas, Units, Department/Office and sub departments. Sorting a given collection of entities on each entity's hierarchy number will place the collection in a replicable and consistent logical order.

The system was initially developed in the late 1980's and has experienced continued evolution in response to changing campus need. Moreover, it is also extensively linked to other campus systems to facilitate operations ranging from payroll processing, to building security, to external reporting. In addition, E/H is updated regularly in response to requests forwarded from units to add, change or delete a given element or group of elements. These updates, concomitant with Data Trustee and Steward authority are the responsibility of OIA.

Given the pervasive nature of entity usage within many campus systems of record entity names are often visible to both internal and external publics. Naming requests must therefore be evaluated to ensure they do not create undue processing challenges, confusion, or the potential for unfavorable optics (ex. listing "SOL Bachelor Program" as the home department of Professor X).

Applicability

This policy applies to the naming of all new and extant active entities within the E/H system, regardless of originating requestor.

Definitions

Entity

Officially recognized element utilized by institution within various systems to conduct its operations. Entities span the depth and breadth of university operations and represent items ranging from student majors and course subjects to academic departments and special financial accounts. Entities are identified by the same 4-digit number across all systems in which they reside.

Structural Entity

Entity used to build UB's official organizational reporting structure. Structural entities generally identify VP areas, academic units, departments and offices.

Functional Entity

Entity used to identify elements used by these organizations to conduct their operations. Examples include student majors, course subjects, financial accounts and research space.

Hierarchy

A unique 10-digit number associated with each entity. Each sequential 2-digit grouping generally identifying major campus VP Areas, Units, Department/Office and sub departments. Merging entities across systems and sorting on hierarchy enables UB to examine institutional activity in a replicable and consistent logical order.

Data Trustee

- Senior leaders of the university (vice-presidents, vice-provosts, and deans) who have responsibility for areas that have systems of record.
- Responsible for ensuring that data stewards, data managers, and data users in their respective area(s) are compliant with data governance principles.
- Classify university data in accordance with the Data Risk Classification Policy.
- Control university data by granting access, renewing access, and revoking access to Data Stewards, Data Managers, and/or Data Users. Data Trustees may delegate this responsibility to Data Stewards or Data Managers.
- Assign Data Stewards who function as described above.
- Data Trustees may work directly with Data Stewards, Data Managers, and/or Data Users.

Data Steward

- Assigned by Data Trustees.
- Responsible for planning and policy-level responsibilities for data in their functional areas.
- Have supervisory responsibilities for defined elements of institutional data.
- May grant, renew, and revoke access to Data Managers and/or Data Users (as delegated by Data Trustees).
- Develop and maintain clear and consistent procedures for data access and use in keeping with university policies.
- Prevent unauthorized access to Category 1 Restricted Data and Category 2 Private Data.
- Ensure that training and awareness of the terms of this procedure are provided.
- Monitor compliance with this procedure.

Data Manger

- University officials and their staff with operational-level responsibility for information management activities related to the capture, maintenance, and dissemination of data. Data Stewards may delegate data administration activities to Data Managers.

Data User

- Individual with data access as granted by a Data Trustee or Data Steward.
- Individual who accesses, retrieves, updates, processes, analyzes, stores, distributes or utilizes university data for the legitimate and documented conduct of university business.

System of Record

The authoritative data source for a given data element or piece of information.

Responsibility

OIA Personnel

- Review all entity naming requests to ensure adherence to entity naming policy. This typically occurs *upon receipt* of a formal request to create or update an entity name.

UB Faculty Senate

- Review all structural entity naming requests associated with academic units or department.
- This review typically occurs *prior* to submission of the formal request to create or update an entity name.

Contact Information

Data Trustee

- Craig Abbey (cwabbey@buffalo.edu)
Vice Provost for Institutional Analysis and Planning
716-645-2791

Data Steward

- Mark Molnar (mmolnar@buffalo.edu)
Assistant VP for University Reporting and Senior Data Architect
716-645-3854

Related Information

Forms

- Basic process overview, contact info and pdf documents:
<https://www.buffalo.edu/provost/oia/entity-hierarchy.html>

University Links

- University Naming Standards:
<https://www.buffalo.edu/administrative-services/policy1/ub-policy-lib/naming/naming-standards.html>
- Faculty Senate Charter:
<https://www.buffalo.edu/facultysenate/Governance/charter.html>