The Problem

Display names for contacts in the TAMU Exchange address book (GAL) are not standardized in any meaningful way. The current process allows individuals to control their display name through their NetID account controls on https://gateway.tamu.edu. This creates two problems:

- it results in some people using a “First Last” format, while others use a “Last, First” format (inconsistency)
- it allows someone to set their display name to something inaccurate, misrepresentative, or even inappropriate

Additionally, there is a further complication caused by the behavior of the most common email application used by many employees, Outlook for Windows. Because of the way this application performs text filtering when searching for names in the address book, the inconsistency in first and last name ordering causes significant problems for some units.

Proposed Solution

Currently, the NetID control panel allows users to edit their display name using a free-form text box. There are no validation controls of any kind on this field. The user can use this field (labeled Common Names in the interface) to add new name entries, which are then presented to the user as selectable options in the Display Name section (see figure 1).

![Figure 1: Current user interface for Directory Entry editing in gateway.tamu.edu (note inaccurate name)](image-url)
We propose that the user interface of gateway.tamu.edu be modified to only allow users to edit the first and middle portion of their name. Further, we propose that last names as provided by the BPP system will always be considered authoritative for the NetID identity, since there is an established process to change this name through HR.

The current field could presumably be used for this purpose, but rather than using each entry in the field as a complete name, it would merely be appended to the end of the official last name. Further clarification could be achieved by also re-labeling the form sections to better indicate their new functions: Common Names could be Other Searchable Names, and Display Name could be Preferred Display Name, for example (see figure 2).

![Proposed changes to interface and functionality for gateway.tamu.edu](image)

**Figure 1:** Proposed changes to interface and functionality for gateway.tamu.edu

For example:

A employee's name as stored in the BPP system is “John Q. Doe”. Initially, gateway.tamu.edu will provide only one choice to the user for his preferred display name:

- Doe, John Q.

This employee prefers to be addressed by his middle name, so he uses the **Edit Display Name** option in gateway.tamu.edu to add two new display names to his record: “J. Quincy” and “Quincy”. The **Preferred Display Names** section now shows three options:

- Doe, John Q.
- Doe, J. Quincy
- Doe, Quincy
Under this proposal, the changes made to the gateway.tamu.edu system should be sufficient to address the current shortcomings in the TAMU Exchange address book. Since all possible options presented to the user for display name choices would then follow a consistent format of Last, First all entries in the Exchange GAL would also be consistent.

Finally, ITAC recognizes the likelihood that there are considerations surrounding the design choices of gateway.tamu.edu that may not be obvious to this body. Clearly, flexibility must be given to the programming staff in Texas A&M IT to make adequate design choices for this system that can achieve the goals of GAL consistency and dependability while also maintaining the internal reliability of existing systems.