



The American Association of Nurse Attorneys

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The American Association of Nurse Attorneys (TAANA) Position Statement Regarding the Juris Doctorate as a Terminal Degree

Education today requires creative collaboration between disciplines. Nursing has a great deal to learn from the legal knowledge base of nurse attorneys. Whether tenure, deanship, or a chair position is under consideration, the existence of a law school on a university campus is irrelevant to the role a nurse attorney may assume in higher education. Faculty holding Juris Doctorates are not appendages of their law schools any more than nurse physiologists are appendages of the physiology department. The Juris Doctorate provides preparation for independent function as a counselor of law, a policy maker, and a scholar of law. Combined with the general BSN and specialized preparation in nursing, the nurse attorney is capable of independent functioning as a policy leader for the College of Nursing, a collaborative team player with the Deans of Health Sciences and Academic Affairs, and scholar of the intricacies of administrative, nursing, legal, ethical, and financial business practice. In the current world of managed care maneuvering, the nurse attorney, College of Nursing Dean, or administrator is well positioned to negotiate the strengths of the faculty and school as creative contracts are arranged for faculty practice, research utilization, and educational outreach.

The individual's entire portfolio of qualifications must be evaluated when a position in higher education is sought. The ability of the nurse attorney to enhance the discipline of nursing through linkages of the two professions must be considered. The Juris Doctorate is only acquired after a minimum of three to six years of postgraduate study. Master's degrees in nursing are usually expected in combination with the Juris Doctorate in Colleges of Nursing. Legal knowledge is intertwined with other areas of knowledge (ethics, philosophy, political science, business, and history, to name a few). The nurse attorney scholar integrates legal and nursing concepts and translates them for the use of nursing staff, faculty, and administrators. With this skill and knowledge, the nurse attorney provides leadership in academic nursing that spans the university community's commitment to knowledge discovery and dissemination.

The American Association of Nurse Attorneys recommends that the Juris Doctorate degree receive equitable treatment in relation to other doctorates when criteria for faculty and nursing school administration are being developed. Whether or not a law school exists on a campus does not determine whether the Juris Doctorate is a creditable degree in academia. The Juris Doctorate is a terminal degree. Accreditation standards must not be restrictive but rather encourage campuses to evaluate their own resources and needs as well as the total qualifications of any faculty or administrative candidate.