

GUIDANCE ON USE OF LEGAL CREDENTIALS BY PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Indiana University is fortunate to employ many professional staff with advanced degrees, including persons who have earned Juris Doctorate or equivalent degrees (“JDs”), such as LLMs and LLBs. Many of our professionals with JDs work in such diverse areas as Gift Development, Research Compliance, Human Resources, Student Affairs, and Environmental Health and Safety, and this guidance is not intended nor should it be construed to minimize the skills, background and value they bring to their positions and to the institution.

However, only members of the Office of Vice President and General Counsel (OVPGC) are authorized to render, or to engage outside counsel to render, legal advice to the university, and only those communications between IU constituents and OVPGC are protected by the attorney-client privilege.

In an effort to eliminate confusion on the part of both internal constituents and outside third parties, IU professional staff employees should not use their legal academic credentials or other designations (J.D., Esq., etc.) in connection with their official identification (such as business cards, website profile, email salutations, name plates, or other outward facing displays) in any manner.

Used in communications with other IU employees, the use of legal academic credentials and designations may create a misperception that the professional staff member is providing legal advice to that employee or engaging in an attorney-client privileged communication. Used in communications with third parties, the use of legal academic credentials and designations may create a misperception that the professional staff member is representing the university as an attorney. Professional staff with JDs should exercise especial caution and diligence in their communications with outside attorneys who are representing students, current or former IU employees, or entities engaged in negotiations with the university.

This guidance is intended to protect both the university and the affected employees from unintended consequences associated with the seemingly benign use of academic credentials and other designations in official identification/communication.

This guidance applies only to professional staff and is not intended to preclude the use of legal academic credentials in connection with biographical information, resumes, curriculum vitae, etc. or by faculty.

FAQs

Can I have my diploma on my wall? Yes.

Can I use JD after my name if I publish an article? Yes.

Can I use JD after my name if my job duties include performing an investigation? No.

Can I use JD after my name if my job duties include negotiating contract terms with a third party, including a state or federal agency? No.

Can I use my JD to represent to others that I am authorized to give legal advice on behalf of Indiana University? No.

Can I use JD in my signature block or when otherwise signing my name and simply include a disclaimer beneath my name indicating that I am not acting as an attorney on behalf of IU? No.

Can I include JD in my signature block to show that I am an alumnus of a certain law school and the year I graduated? No.

Can I use JD on my resume, curriculum vitae (CV), or on material that may be handed out when I am speaking at an engagement or presenting to a group? Yes.

If you have any questions, or for all other circumstances, please call OVPGC for guidance.