

Dealing with the Difficult Student – Advice from a Faculty Member, a Program Director and an Academic Lawyer

Patrick Knott, PhD, PA-C
Elana Min, MPAS, PA-C
Patricia Bergeson, JD
Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science

Introduction: Doesn't it seem that whenever you enroll a group of smart, motivated, professional students, there always seems to be one "bad apple" in the bunch who continues to cause problems for everyone? We will discuss some of the common problems that students pose, and how they can be handled. Each case will be discussed from the perspective of the faculty member, the administrator, and the university attorney.

Learning Objectives: At the end of this presentation, participants will

- 1.) Recognize that difficult student issues are common to all PA Programs.
- 2.) Understand the key academic, administrative and professional components of common student problems.
- 3.) Understand the legal rights and responsibilities of PA Program faculty in dealing with difficult students.
- 4.) Analyze how the concerns of the faculty may conflict or coincide with the legal rights and restraints of the institution.

Case One: A Bad Background Check

Your student tells you during the admissions process that they have a squeaky clean record, but at the beginning of the clinical year, a criminal background check indicates that she has skeletons in the closet that didn't come from anatomy class! What do you do now?

Reference Source: AAMC (www.aamc.org)

Case Two: A Surprise Disability

Your student starts to have difficulty passing classes, and just when your academic discipline policy is about to kick in, their problem suddenly turns into a disability that is protected by the ADA laws. What do you do now?

Reference Source: US Dept of Education, Office of Civil Rights (www.ed.gov)

Case Three: He's just CREEPY!

There is something about that student in the third row... No one can put a finger on what it is, but he creeps all the women in the class out and no one wants to work with him on projects – and especially not in physical exam lab. The class president wants you to do something about it. What do you do now?

**The fact scenarios presented are fictional and a composite of situations arising at various institutions, and drawn also from facts cited in court decisions. No similarity to any person or institution is intended or implied.*