

**BEFORE THE PERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD
STATE OF WASHINGTON**

EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY,	}	
Appellant,	}	CASE NO. R-ALLO-09-004
vs.	}	
TOM AKIN,	}	ORDER OF THE BOARD
Respondent.	}	FOLLOWING HEARING ON
	}	EXCEPTIONS TO THE
	}	DETERMINATION OF THE DIRECTOR

Hearing on Exceptions. This appeal came before the Personnel Resources Board, JOSEPH PINZONE, Chair, and DJ MARK, Member, for a telephonic hearing on Appellant's exceptions to the director's determination dated February 12, 2009. The hearing was held on September 23, 2009.

Appearances. Appellant Eastern Washington University (EWU) was represented by Lori Kory, Human Resources Associate. Respondent Tom Akin represented himself.

Background. Mr. Akin was employed by EWU as an Information Technology Specialist 5 (ITS5). By letter dated June 13, 2007, Mr. Akin requested a review of his position and asked that his position be reallocated to Information Technology Systems/Applications Specialist 6 (ITS/AS6) classification. By letter dated December 3, 2007, EWU denied his request.

On December 24, 2007, Mr. Akin requested a director's review of EWU's determination. By letter dated February 12, 2009, the director's designee granted Mr. Akin's request.

On March 13, 2009, EWU filed exceptions to the director's determination. EWU's exceptions are the subject of this proceeding.

Mr. Akin was the Telecommunications Manager in the Information Technology-Telecommunications unit at Eastern Washington University. The majority of his duties included managing daily duties of

1 information technology staff, leading and managing technology and infrastructure projects, and
2 providing voice and data services and support for the campus. In performing his duties, he interfaced
3 with senior staff and administrators, established and maintained business processes to support efficient
4 service delivery, and coordinated and communicated with external agencies

5
6 **Summary of EWU's Arguments.** EWU argues that Mr. Akin's position did not meet the ITS/AS6
7 classification because:

- 8 • He was not EWU's highest level of authority from either a technical or administrative
9 perspective.
- 10 • He was not designated in writing as the highest level authority as required by the ITS/AS6
11 classification.
- 12 • The duties he performs were a very close fit with ITS5 class in that he functioned at the expert
13 level, provides expert consultation, and was responsible for institution-wide systems.
- 14 • His primary responsibilities were institution-wide telecommunications and networking systems
15 as referenced in the ITS5 definition.
- 16 • Every duty he performed equated to and was consistent with the duties described in the ITS5
17 class.

18 Respondent contends that Mr. Akin's position should be allocated to the ITS5 classification.

19 **Summary of Mr. Akin's Arguments.** Mr. Akin argues that he functioned as the highest level
20 authority for telecommunications because there was no executive level management with the technical
21 expertise in this area. He further argues that the he was the project leader for integrating new
22 technology with existing technology, that he development agency-wide architecture and that he
23 mastered the ability to translate technical terminology into business terms. Mr. Akin contends that his
24 job description describes duties at the ITS/AS6 level and provided the written designation needed to be
25 allocated to the ITS/AS6 level.

26
27 **Primary Issue.** Whether the director's determination that Appellant's position should be reallocated to
28 the Information Technology Systems/Applications Specialist 6 classification should be affirmed.

Relevant Classifications. Information Technology Systems Specialist 5, class code 2409 (subsequently Information Technology Specialist 5, class code 479N), and Information Technology Systems/Applications Specialist 6, class code 479N.

Decision of the Board. The purpose of a position review is to determine which classification best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of a position. A position review is neither a measurement of the volume of work performed, nor an evaluation of the expertise with which that work is performed. A position review is a comparison of the duties and responsibilities of a particular position to the available classification specifications. This review results in a determination of the class that best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of the position. See Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

The definition for Information Technology Systems/Applications Specialist 6 (ITS/AS6) states:

Serves as the highest level authority for an agency or in a major subdivision of DSHS in an information technology specialty area such as, but not limited to: operating system architecture, network architecture, applications development, applications support and enhancement, desktop/server operating systems, data architecture/administration, security architecture/administration, project management methodology or telephony systems architecture.

The distinguishing characteristics for the ITSAS6 state, in part:

This is the expert professional level where incumbents are designated in writing by IT/IS management to provide technical and organizational leadership in a specialized area of technology. Incumbents possess advanced technical as well as business knowledge and grasp the overall impact of their specialty such that they are trusted by management to independently deal with high risk, high profile initiatives that may impact significant/fundamental public services. Incumbents have mastered the ability to translate technological options into business terms and interact with executive management to create technology solutions to mission critical business problems. Incumbents in this class serve as the agency spokesperson in their area of technical expertise and may make commitments on behalf of their agency. Serve as a technical mentor, coach and trainer to others. Often supervises others.

(Emphasis added.)

1 Mr. Akin's job description encompasses duties and responsibilities that require expert ability in
2 evaluating capabilities, characteristics, and requirements of telecommunication and networking
3 environments for the University's enterprise-wide high-risk/high impact telecommunication systems
4 and tools. His job description also indicates that he was responsible for consulting, managing projects,
5 providing technical support and assistance, performing system administration functions, and leading
6 and directing other IT staff.

7
8 In Lisle v. Department of Labor and Industries, PAB Case No. ALLO-00-0020 (2000), the
9 Personnel Appeals Board, predecessor to this Board, reallocated an employee to the ITS/AS6
10 classification after finding that the employee's classification questionnaire, which was signed by
11 his supervisor and by the Assistant Director of Information Services, designated the employee as
12 the agency's highest level authority and highest technical specialist for the department.

13
14 Further, in Osborne v. Department of Transportation, PAB Case No. ALLO-02-0032 (2003), the
15 Personnel Appeals Board discussed the importance of written designation at the ITS/AS6 level. In
16 Osborne, the board stated:

17 Consistent with our decisions in Griffith v. Dep't of Ecology, PAB Case No.
18 ALLO-00-0016 (2000) and Stash v. Dep't of Ecology, PAB Case No. ALLO-00-
19 0001 (1999), when a classification specification requires written designation, we
20 must look for a document that confers such a designation upon the position in
21 question. This written documentation can be a formal agency designation form, an
22 approved CQ, or other written documentation. We find no document that confers,
23 as required in the ITS/AS6 specification, written designation for Appellant's
24 position to be designated at the ITS/AS6 job classification. Because Appellant
25 lacks written designation from the IT/IS management, the scope of duties and level
26 of independence assigned to his position are best described by the ITAS5
27 classification.

28
29 In this case, the job description for Mr. Akin's position contains no written designation by management
as the highest-level authority or expert professional level position. Allocation to the ITS/AS6
classification is not appropriate unless such a written designation has been given by information

1 technology or information services management. Lacking this designation, Mr. Akin's position does
2 not fit within the ITS/AS6 classification.

3
4 The definition for Information Technology Specialist 5 states:

5 "This is the supervisory or expert level. Provides expert consultation and
6 specialized analysis, design, development, acquisition, installation, maintenance,
7 programming, testing, quality assurance, troubleshooting, and/or problem
8 resolution tasks for major organization-wide, high risk/high impact, or mission-
9 critical applications computing and/or telecommunication systems, projects,
10 databases or database management systems; support products, or operational
11 problems.

12 Performs highly-complex tasks such as conducting capacity planning to determine
13 organization-wide needs and make recommendations; designing complex agency-
14 or institution-wide enterprise systems crossing multiple networks, platforms or
15 telecommunication environments; overseeing the daily operations of large-scale or
16 enterprise systems; identifying and resolving operational problems for major high
17 risk systems with centralized, organization-wide functions; testing multi-
18 dimensional applications, providing quality assurance; developing standards or
19 enhancing existing, high risk and impact, mission critical applications; integrating
20 business solutions, or writing feasibility studies and decision packages for high
21 visibility/impact initiatives.

22 Provides leadership and expert consultation for large-scale projects or enterprise
23 systems that often integrate new technology and/or carry out organization-wide
24 information technology functions, or impact other institutions or agencies.
25 Provides project management leadership, technical expertise and demonstrates
26 knowledge of project management practices, principles, and skills.

27 May supervise information technology specialists or function as a recognized
28 expert who is sought out by others in resolving or assessing controversial or
29 precedent-setting issues."

30 The scope of Mr. Akin's assigned duties and responsibilities and his level of authority are fully
31 encompassed in the ITS5 classification.

32 In a hearing on exceptions, the Appellant has the burden of proof. WAC 357-52-110. EWU has met its
33 burden of proof. Therefore, the appeal on exceptions should be granted, and the director's
34 determination, dated February 12, 2009, should be reversed.

ORDER

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the appeal on exceptions by EWU is granted, and the position remains allocated to the Information Technology Specialist 5 classification.

DATED this _____ day of _____, 2009.

WASHINGTON PERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD

JOSEPH PINZONE, Chair

DJ MARK, Member