

BEFORE THE PERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD
STATE OF WASHINGTON

JON RANKIN,

Appellant,

vs.

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY,

Respondent.

CASE NO. R-ALLO-06-012

ORDER OF THE BOARD
FOLLOWING HEARING ON
EXCEPTIONS TO THE
DETERMINATION OF THE DIRECTOR

Hearing on Exceptions. This appeal came on for hearing before the Personnel Resources Board, MARSHA TADANO LONG, Chair, and LARRY GOODMAN, Vice Chair, on Appellant's exceptions to the director's determination dated June 15, 2006. The hearing was held at the office of the Personnel Resources Board in Olympia, Washington, on October 5, 2006.

Appearances. Appellant Jon Rankin was present and represented himself *pro se*. Central Washington University (CWU) was represented by Traci Klein of CWU's Human Resource office.

Background. Appellant's position was allocated to the class of Safety Professional III. He submitted a Position Review Request form, which he signed on June 1, 2005, requesting reallocation of his position to the Ergonomist 4 classification. Appellant's supervisor, Ronald Munson, agreed that the information on the form was accurate and complete.

By letter dated September 1, 2005, Respondent denied Appellant's request. On September 28, 2005, Appellant appealed CWU's decision to the director of the Department of Personnel (DOP). On May 1, 2006, C.J. Iwata, Human Resource Consultant for DOP, conducted a review of Appellant's request. She forwarded the results of her review to Teri Thompson, Classification and Compensation Program Director for DOP. By letter dated June 15, 2006, Ms. Thompson, acting as the director's designee, determined that Appellant's position was properly allocated to the Safety Professional III classification

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2 On July 13, 2006, Appellant filed exceptions to the director's determination. Appellant's exceptions
3 are the subject of this proceeding.
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5 Appellant's position is assigned to the Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) Department at
6 CWU, however, his office is located elsewhere on campus. In part, EH&S provides oversight of
7 environmental compliance, hazardous materials management, and health and safety issues.
8 Appellant's supervisor is the manager of EH&S, but because Appellant's area of expertise is
9 ergonomics, he has little interaction with his supervisor or with other members of the EH&S staff.
10 Appellant's position is funded by EH&S but operating costs and office support associated with the
11 ergonomics program are provided by Academic Facilities.
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13 Appellant is responsible for the Applied Ergonomics Program at CWU. His principle duties include
14 evaluation of occupational ergonomic risk factors, recommending improved work practices, and
15 applying solutions to correct defective equipment. Appellant plans for the procurement of
16 replacement furnishings, tools and ergonomic equipment for CWU, provides guidance to the design
17 engineering and production activities at the CWU ergonomics laboratory, and supervises the
18 delivery and final adjustment of ergonomic workstations for CWU.
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20 **Summary of Appellant's Arguments.** Appellant argues that safety and ergonomics are totally
21 separate programs. Appellant contends that he performs ergonomic work that is not assigned by nor
22 overseen by EH&S. He develops and delivers training, provides consultation services prior to the
23 purchase of equipment, and responds to approximately 30 requests per week for ergonomic services
24 from the faculty and staff of CWU and its branch campuses. Appellant asserts that he performs
25 ergonomic duties, not safety related activities, and that his position is best described by the
26 Ergonomist 4 classification.
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1 **Summary of Respondent's Arguments.** Respondent agrees that Appellant provides ergonomic
2 services to faculty and staff and that he applies the science of ergonomics in the performance of his
3 duties and responsibilities. However, Respondent asserts that he does not perform ergonomic
4 research in a laboratory or in the field nor is he responsible for insurance claims or investigating
5 ergonomic problems in industry as required for allocation to an Ergonomist classification.
6 Respondent acknowledges that neither class fully encompasses the work performed by Appellant but
7 asserts that the Safety Professional III provides the best fit for his position.

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9 **Primary Issue.** Whether the director's determination that Appellant's position is properly allocated
10 to the Safety Professional III classification should be affirmed.

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12 **Relevant Classifications.** Safety Professional III, class code 2685; and Ergonomist 4, class code
13 305D.

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15 **Decision of the Board.** The purpose of a position review is to determine which classification
16 best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of a position. A position review is neither a
17 measurement of the volume of work performed, nor an evaluation of the expertise with which
18 that work is performed. Also, a position review is not a comparison of work performed by
19 employees in similar positions. A position review is a comparison of the duties and
20 responsibilities of a particular position to the available classification specification. This review
21 results in a determination of the class that best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of
22 the position. Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

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24 The Category Concept for the Ergonomists Occupational Category provides that "[t]his is a
25 professional level series responsible for researching and designing systems and equipment for
26 use in the workplace. Principal duties include performing laboratory and field research and
27 evaluating ergonomic risk factors." (Emphasis added.)

1 The Distinguishing Characteristics for the Ergonomist 3 state: “[p] Positions at this level work
2 under a higher-level Ergonomist and primarily perform field and laboratory work. This includes
3 collecting and analyzing statistical data involving insurance claims and investigating suspected
4 ergonomic problems in industry to determine actual and potential ergonomic effects.”
5 (Emphasis added.)
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7 The Distinguishing Characteristics for the Ergonomist 4 state: “[t]his is the highest level in the
8 series responsible for planning, organizing, conducting, and evaluating ergonomic assessments
9 and research studies. This level may supervise lower level Ergonomists, research staff or
10 students.”
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12 When viewed in isolation, it is understandable how Appellant could believe that his position fits the
13 Ergonomist 4 classification. However, this occupational category requires close review in its
14 entirety to determine the type of positions intended to be allocated to this category. Positions
15 allocated to this category are responsible for ergonomic research, analyses, and investigation in
16 industry, not for providing ergonomic services to a single state employer. The duties and
17 responsibilities assigned to Appellant’s position do not meet the scope or breadth of work intended
18 to be encompassed by the Ergonomists Occupational Category.
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20 The definition for Basic Function for Safety Professional III states: “[a]s senior-level safety
21 professional, advise other health and safety professionals and institutional departments,
22 administrators, and personnel in area(s) of expertise. Review, recommend, develop, coordinate and
23 administer safety policies, programs, regulations, systems and procedures to meet institutional
24 needs.”
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26 The Distinguishing Characteristics of the Safety Professional III classification state, in relevant part:
27 “[u]nder general direction, as senior-level specialist in a designated safety area, develop and
28 administer institutional safety programs such as, but not limited to, . . . ergonomics . . . Integrate
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requirements of complex regulations with the needs of the entire institution. Exercise decision-making authority and advise other . . . institutional departments, administrators, and personnel in matters related to area(s) of expertise. Provide leadership functions such as assisting others with complex problem resolution, recommending courses of action, and training other health and safety professionals.”

Appellant’s position fits within the basic function and the distinguishing characteristics of the Safety Professional III classification. Appellant works under general direction. He is the senior-level ergonomist for CWU, he advises other departments, administrators and personnel in his area of expertise which is ergonomics. He reviews, recommends, develops, coordinates and administers the Applied Ergonomics Program to meet CWU’s needs. He provides leadership in ergonomic functions, assists others with solving complex ergonomic problems, recommends courses of action such as purchasing equipment and configuring workstations, and provides ergonomic training for other professionals at CWU.

Appellant’s position is properly allocated to the Safety Professional III classification.

ORDER

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the appeal on exceptions by Jon Rankin is denied and the Director’s determination dated June 15, 2006 is affirmed and adopted.

DATED this ____ day of _____, 2006.

WASHINGTON PERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD

MARSHA TADANO LONG, Chair

LARRY GOODMAN, Vice Chair

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