

BEFORE THE PERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD
STATE OF WASHINGTON

THOMAS MCNEELY,

Appellant,

vs.

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY,

Respondent.

CASE NO. R-ALLO-08-011

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, on Appellant's exceptions to the director's determination dated April 17, 2008. The hearing was held at the office of the Personnel Resources Board in Olympia, Washington, on October 29, 2008. JOSEPH PINZONE, Vice Chair, listened to the recorded proceedings, reviewed the file and exhibits and participated in this decision.

Appearances. Appellant Thomas McNeely was not present; however, he was represented by Eric T. Nordlof, Attorney at Law and General Counsel for the Public School Employees of Washington. Respondent Western Washington University (WWU) was represented by Holly Karpstein, Classification and Compensation Manager and Gil Hodgson, Assistant Attorney General.

Background. Appellant's position was allocated to the class of Information Technology Specialist 3 (ITS 3). He requested reallocation to the Information Technology Specialist 4 (ITS 4) classification. On October 4, 2007, Respondent informed Appellant that his position was properly allocated. On October 29, 2007, Appellant requested a director's review of his position.

1 Holly Platz, the director's investigator, conducted a review of Appellant's position based on
2 written documentation. By letter dated April 17, 2008, Ms. Platz determined that Appellant's
3 position was properly allocated to the ITS 3 classification.

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5 On May 13, 2008, Appellant filed exceptions to the director's determination. Appellant's exceptions
6 are the subject of this proceeding.

7
8 Appellant performs information technology work for the Libraries Department at WWU. Within
9 the Libraries Department, Appellant is assigned to the Library Systems unit and works under the
10 general supervision of the Head of Library Systems. Appellant develops and implements
11 information technology solutions to aid in the accomplishment of the Library's mission and
12 operations. Appellant works with multiple library servers and creates software programs to
13 streamline work. Appellant also solves technical problems; identifies and evaluates software
14 techniques and procedures; researches technology methods; and plans, coordinates, and executes
15 IT projects involving multiple phases. As part of the technical management of library servers and
16 network services, Appellant installs, configures, manages, and troubleshoots server operating
17 systems, including some that perform multiple functions or interact with other servers.

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19 **Summary of Appellant's Arguments.** Appellant asserts he exercises a great deal of autonomy,
20 initiative, discretion, and independence in performing the duties of his job. Appellant contends he
21 plans, organizes, and carries out his own work, and develops procedures and solutions to
22 accomplish the goals of the library. Appellant asserts he is part of a department that oversees all
23 library information technology systems and that he serves as the leader within his work group.
24 Appellant contends the duties assigned to his position involve greater complexity than the other
25 two ITS 3 positions in his unit. In addition, Appellant contends he leads the other staff and is
26 considered the specialist in the unit. Appellant asserts he does not receive technical guidance
27 from anyone else in the organization.

1 Appellant contends that his IT work has wide area impact and that his specialized knowledge
2 about library operations and his innovate solutions improve library operations, support the
3 library's mission, and directly tie to the university as a whole. Appellant asserts his information
4 technology responsibilities have much broader impact than just the library and that his work
5 affects the entire university, including the core mission of the university. Appellant contends the
6 library's services are mission critical to every other department in carrying out the academic
7 mission. Appellant asserts his first and second-level supervisors support reallocation and that the
8 level of duties and responsibilities assigned to his position meet the ITS 4 classification.

9
10 **Summary of Respondent's Arguments.** Respondent acknowledges that Appellant develops new
11 procedures for the use of technology in the library, that he plans, coordinates and executes
12 projects, and creates software to automate or streamline work in the library. Respondent also
13 agrees that Appellant understands library business and that he may apply innovative approaches,
14 as well as standard approaches to accomplish the goals of the library. However, Respondent
15 asserts the library is a single business function and the Libraries Department is one of sixteen
16 departments within Academic Affairs, which is one of six divisions at WWU. Respondent
17 contends Appellant has not been assigned work at a level that impacts multiple business areas with
18 multiple systems university-wide.

19
20 While Respondent acknowledges that systems may interface, Respondent asserts Appellant does
21 not perform work on other systems or collaborate with others about multiple systems at an
22 enterprise level. Respondent asserts the main library system server resides in the main data center
23 for the university and that Appellant primarily works with library based projects. Respondent
24 recognizes Appellant has a certain amount of autonomy within Library Services but contends
25 Information Technology Services provides overall guidance and sets security standards. Further,
26 Respondent does not view library systems as mission-critical to the university because alternate
27 methods of research exist when library systems cannot function. Respondent asserts Appellant
28 applies his knowledge of the library systems to plan, organize, and implement his work at a level
29 of autonomy and independence consistent with the level and scope of the ITS 3 class.

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2 **Primary Issue.** Whether the director's determination that Appellant's position is properly allocated to
3 the Information Technology Specialist 3 classification should be affirmed.

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5 **Relevant Classification.** Information Technology Specialist 3, class code 479K, and Information
6 Technology Specialist 4, class code 479L.

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

15
16 The distinguishing characteristics for the ITS4 classification include the following:

17 Performs analysis, system design, acquisition, installation, maintenance,
18 programming, project management, quality assurance, troubleshooting, problem
19 resolution, and/or consulting tasks for complex computing system, application,
20 data access/retrieval, multi-functional databases or database management systems,
21 telecommunication, project or operational problems.

22 As a senior-level specialist in an assigned area of responsibility and/or as a team or
23 project leader, applies advanced technical knowledge and considerable discretion
24 to evaluate and resolve complex tasks such as planning and directing large-scale
25 projects; conducting capacity planning; designing multiple-server systems;
26 directing or facilitating the installation of complex systems, hardware, software,
27 application interfaces, or applications; developing and implementing quality
28 assurance testing and performance monitoring; planning, administering, and
29 coordinating organization-wide information technology training; acting as a liaison
on the development of applications; representing institution-wide computing
and/or telecommunication standards and philosophy at meetings; or developing
security policies and standards.

Incumbents understand the customer's business from the perspective of a senior business person and are conversant in the customer's business language. Projects assigned to this level impact geographical groupings of offices/facilities, and/or regional, divisional, or multiple business units with multiple functions. The majority of tasks performed have wide-area impact, integrate new technology, and/or affect how the mission is accomplished.

The information technology duties Appellant performs in support of library systems do not have the wide-area impact characteristic of an ITS 4 position. Although all of the university's divisions may have access to the systems Appellant works with in Library Services, he does not perform work at a level that greatly impacts multiple business areas with multiple systems across campus. While some library systems may interact with other systems, Appellant does not have the breadth of responsibility to integrate new technology or work with complex systems outside the scope of the library.

The majority of Appellant's work impacts the goals and mission of the library. Furthermore, while services to academic departments may be affected in the event library servers become unavailable, the operations of the university as a whole would continue to function. Previous Board decisions affirmed allocation to an ITS 4 position, in part, because the incumbent performed work that impacted multiple business units with multiple functions, had wide-area impact, integrated new technology, and affected how the mission of the organization was accomplished. Pogue and Goshorn v. Dept. of Labor and Industries, PRB Case Nos. R-ALLO-07-017 and R-ALLO-07-018 (2008).

In this case, Appellant has not met his burden of proving the work assigned to his position meets the level or breadth of impact intended by the ITS 4 classification.

The distinguishing characteristics for the ITS3 classification state:

In support of information systems and users in an assigned area of responsibility, independently performs consulting, designing, programming, installation, maintenance, quality assurance, troubleshooting and/or technical support for applications, hardware and software products, databases, database management

1 systems, support products, network infrastructure equipment, or
2 telecommunications infrastructure, software or hardware.

3 Uses established work procedures and innovative approaches to complete
4 assignments and coordinate projects such as conducting needs assessments; leading
5 projects; creating installation plans; analyzing and correcting network
6 malfunctions; serving as system administrator; monitoring or enhancing operating
7 environments; or supporting, maintaining and enhancing existing applications.

8 The majority of assignments and projects are moderate in size and impact an
9 agency division or large workgroup or single business function; or internal or
10 satellite operations, multiple users, or more than one group. Consults with higher-
11 level technical staff to resolve complex problems.

12 We recognize that Appellant has a strong working knowledge of library operations and may lead
13 and direct co-workers in his work unit. However, the duties and responsibilities of Appellant's
14 position are consistent with the distinguishing characteristics of the ITS 3 classification. The
15 majority of Appellant's work is limited in scope to the library system. He performs duties in
16 support of the library's information technology systems, works independently, and uses innovative
17 approaches to complete assignments and resolve issues within his assigned area of responsibility.
18 While some of Appellant's duties may involve a variety of complex tasks, the majority of his work
19 impacts the single business function of the library.

20 Most positions within the civil service system occasionally perform duties that appear in more
21 than one classification. However, when determining the appropriate classification for a specific
22 position, the duties and responsibilities of that position must be considered in their entirety and the
23 position must be allocated to the classification that provides the best fit overall for the majority of
24 the position's duties and responsibilities. Dudley v Dept. of Labor and Industries, R-ALLO-07-
25 007 (2007).

26 In this case, the Information Technology Specialist 3 classification best encompasses the majority of the
27 duties and the level of responsibility assigned to Appellant's position.

1 In a hearing on exceptions, the Appellant has the burden of proof. WAC 357-52-110. Appellant has
2 not met his burden of proof.

3
4 **ORDER**

5 NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the appeal on exceptions by Thomas
6 McNeely is denied and the director's determination dated April 17, 2008, is affirmed and adopted.

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8 DATED this _____ day of _____, 2008.

9 WASHINGTON PERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD

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11 _____
12 MARSHA TADANO LONG, Chair

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14 _____
15 JOSEPH PINZONE, Vice Chair