

BEFORE THE PERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD
STATE OF WASHINGTON

LOWER COLUMBIA COLLEGE,)	
Appellant,)	CASE NO. R-ALLO-09-035
vs.)	
BRENDA FARLAND,)	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; LAURA ANDERSON, Vice Chair; and DJ MARK, Member, for a hearing on Appellant's exceptions to the director's determination dated September 17, 2009. The hearing was held at the office of the Personnel Resources Board in Olympia, Washington, on December 17, 2009.

Appearances. Appellant Lower Columbia College was represented by Nolan Wheeler, Director of Human Resources. Respondent Brenda Farland was represented by Desiree Desselle, Labor Advocate with the Washington Federation of State Employees. Ms. Farland and Ms. Desselle appeared by telephone.

Background. Ms. Farland works in the Computer Maintenance section of Information Technology Services within Administrative Services at Lower Columbia College (LCC). On August 13, 2008, she submitted a Position Review Request (PRR), asking that her Information Technology Specialist 3 (ITS3) position be reallocated to the Information Technology Specialist 4 (ITS4) classification.

By memorandum dated October 6, 2008, LCC determined that Ms. Farland's position was properly allocated to the ITS 3 classification. Ms. Farland received LCC's determination on October 30, 2008. On November 4, 2008, the Department of Personnel received Ms. Farland's request for a director's review of LCC's allocation determination.

1 By letter dated September 17, 2009, the director's designee determined that Ms. Farland's position
2 best fit the ITS4 level. On October 9, 2009, LCC filed exceptions to the director's determination.
3 LCC's exceptions are the subject of this proceeding.

4 The majority of Ms. Farland's duties and responsibilities involve working on the "Angel" Course
5 Management System and server at LCC. The Angel system is a complex, multi-level system that
6 enables the college to offer distance learning to students. During the time period relevant to her
7 position review, Ms. Farland was also responsible for LCC's Document Imaging System
8 (Hershey). Her duties and responsibilities required her to perform analysis, design, updates and
9 maintenance on both systems. In addition, her responsibilities include support, maintenance and
10 security for the Angel system which required her to apply advanced technical knowledge to
11 evaluate and resolve complex problems as well as respond to and resolve emergency situations.
12

13 **Summary of LCC's Arguments.** LCC argues that February 8, 2008 through August 8, 2008 is the
14 time frame relevant to Ms. Farland's position review and asserts that the director's designee erred
15 by considering evidence from outside of that timeframe. LCC further argues that for the purposes of
16 her position review, Ms. Farland expanded the scope of her assigned duties. LCC acknowledges
17 that she assumed work on the Hershey system in the absence of an ITS4 employee, but asserts that
18 her level of responsibility for the system fit within the ITS3 level. LCC asserts that Ms. Farland's
19 duties are not at the senior specialist level found in the ITS4 class but rather consist of general
20 maintenance duties including installing service packs, defragging, doing updates, performing
21 backups, and performing other maintenance activities found in the ITS3 class. LCC contends that
22 Ms. Farland is not the sole person responsible for the Angel System; rather Ms. Farland and two
23 other employees are responsible for the Angel system. LCC explains that Ms. Farland is responsible
24 for maintenance and support of the system; the Manager of E-learning is responsible for the
25 classroom side which includes administering the Angel accounts of the students, managing
26 connections and users, monitoring user accounts, and establishing timelines and strategic planning
27 for system updates; and the Administrative Assistant who reports to the Manager of E-learning is
28 responsible for troubleshooting the problems reported by system users and determining if the
29

1 problem should be forwarded to her Manager or to Ms. Farland for resolution. LCC further argues
2 that Ms. Farland's job is to keep the system running and that she does not perform senior specialist
3 duties such as researching and selecting new systems, analyzing, installing and building systems,
4 exercising acquisition authority, performing capacity planning, and exercising purchasing authority.
5 LCC asserts that ultimate responsibility for the system does not lie with one person; rather the
6 decision making is done by the Director of Information Technology Services, the Manager of E-
7 learning, and the LCC Cabinet. LCC argues that the scope of duties and level of authority assigned
8 to Ms. Farland's position fit within the ITS3 classification.

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10 **Summary of Ms. Farland's Arguments.** Ms. Farland argues that the director's designee based her
11 decision on the appropriate documentation and that the documents outside of the six month
12 timeframe should have been considered and given the appropriate weight. Ms. Farland asserts that
13 those documents demonstrate the ongoing work she performed, that management was aware of the
14 level of work she performed, and that she is the primary person assigned to operate, maintain,
15 update, resolve, and troubleshoot the Angel system. Ms. Farland contends that there is no evidence
16 to show that anyone else was assigned responsibility for the Hershey system during the review
17 period. She argues that the ITS4 who had primary responsibility for Hershey was out of the office
18 during that time and therefore support of the system was assigned entirely to her. Ms. Farland
19 contends that there is no evidence to show that anyone else was assigned responsibility for the
20 Angel system and that while others had access to the system, they did not have administrative rights
21 to perform work on the system. Ms. Farland argues that she installs, configures, updates, adds
22 memory, performs backups, troubleshoots, customizes and does everything necessary to support the
23 Angel system. Ms. Farland acknowledges that other ITS4 staff installed the hardware for the system
24 but argues that they did not install the software or perform the configuration that took the system
25 from a single source to a cluster. Ms. Farland further argues that the Angel system has a huge
26 impact on LCC and allows over 3000 students to have access to electronic media to download
27 information and upload assignments in the electronic learning system. Ms. Farland contends that
28 the exhibits substantiate the level and scope of her duties and asserts that she is working at the ITS4
29 level.

1 **Primary Issue.** Whether the director's determination that Appellant's position is properly
2 allocated to the Information Technology Specialist 4 classification should be affirmed.
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4 **Relevant Classifications.** Information Technology Specialist 3, class code 479K, and Information
5 Technology Specialist 4, class code 479L.
6

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

15 The definition for Information Technology Specialist 4 states:

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

21 As a senior-level specialist in an assigned area of responsibility and/or as a team
22 or project leader, applies advanced technical knowledge and considerable
23 discretion to evaluate and resolve complex tasks such as planning and directing
24 large-scale projects; conducting capacity planning; designing multiple-server
25 systems; directing or facilitating the installation of complex systems, hardware,
26 software, application interfaces, or applications; developing and implementing
27 quality assurance testing and performance monitoring; planning, administering,
28 and coordinating organization-wide information technology training; acting as a
29 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 ITS4 classification encompasses a broad scope of duties that are assigned to positions that perform senior level duties that typically include devising methods and procedures to meet new and unique work requirements and to resolve new and unique problems for complex systems and applications. During the time period of the review, Ms. Farland provided maintenance and support for the Angel system and the Hershey system, but the majority and scope of her duties and her level of responsibility did not reach the level of new or unique work anticipated at the ITS4 level. She did not apply advanced technical knowledge or exercise discretion at the ITS4 level. She was not responsible for “planning and directing large-scale projects; conducting capacity planning; designing multiple-server systems; directing or facilitating the installation of complex systems, hardware, software, application interfaces, or applications; developing and implementing quality assurance testing and performance monitoring; planning, administering, and 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.” Her position did not have the scope or level of independent authority encompassed at the ITS4 level.

The definition for Information Technology Specialist 3 states:

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

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

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

Ms. Farland's position best fits within the ITS3 level. The Angel system was installed prior to the time period covered by Ms. Farland's position review. During the period of the review she was not involved in the installation of a complex system; rather she was responsible for maintaining and supporting the Angel system and the Hershey system. Her duties and responsibilities included consulting, installing updates, maintenance, quality assurance, troubleshooting and technical support and required her to use innovative approaches to complete assignments. The maintenance and support of the Angel system has been an ongoing responsibility of Ms. Farland's position. In addition, the Angel system impacts multiple users and more than one group – students and faculty. In performing her work, Ms. Farland consults with other technical staff to resolve complex problems. The majority of her duties and responsibilities are encompassed by the ITS3 classification.

In a hearing on exceptions, the Appellant has the burden of proof. WAC 357-52-110. LCC has met its burden of proof. Therefore, the appeal on exceptions should be granted, and the director's determination, dated September 17, 2009, should be reversed.

ORDER

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the appeal on exceptions by Lower Columbia College is granted, and the position remains allocated to the Information Technology Specialist 3 classification.

DATED this ____ day of _____, 2010.

WASHINGTON PERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD

JOSEPH PINZONE, Chair

LAURA ANDERSON, Vice Chair

DJ MARK, Member