BEFORE THE PERSONNEL APPEALS BOARD

STATE OF WASHINGTON

DON LOUGHMILLER, Appellant, v. WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, Respondent.	Case No. ALLO-03-0016 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 Appeals Board, GERALD L. MORGEN, Vice Chair, on Appellant's exceptions to the Director's determination dated March 11, 2003. The hearing was held at the Conference Room at the Western Washington University Human Resources Office in Bellingham, Washington, on August 21, 2003. BUSSE NUTLEY, Member, listened to the recorded proceedings, reviewed the file and exhibits, and participated in the decision in this matter. WALTER T. HUBBARD, Chair, did not participate in the hearing or in the decision in this matter.

Appearances. Appellant Don Loughmiller was present and was represented by Luis Moscoso of the Washington Public Employees Association. Respondent Western Washington University was represented by Cheri Hayes, Human Resources Specialist, and Holly Karpstein, Human Resources Specialist.

Background. As the result of a class study encompassing the Information Technology classes, the Washington State Personnel Resources Board adopted a new class series of Information Technology Systems Specialist 1 – 5. Holly Karpstein, Human Resources Specialist, conducted a review of Appellant's position. By letter dated January 29, 2002, Ms. Karpstein informed Appellant that his position was being reallocated from Computer Support Technology III to the new Information Technology Systems Specialist II effective January 1, 2002.

By letter dated February 27, 2002, George Weirich, Senior Employee Relations Specialist of the Washington Public Employees Association, filed a request for review on behalf of Appellant to the Director of the Department of Personnel. Appellant requested that his position be reallocated to the Information Technology Systems Specialist III classification.

On July 12, 2002, Sandra Stewart, Human Resource Consultant for the Department of Personnel, conducted a telephone verification interview. By letter dated March 11, 2003, Teri Thompson, Department of Personnel Classification and Compensation Program Director, informed Appellant that his position was properly allocated to the Information Technology Systems Specialist II classification.

On April 10, 2003, Appellant filed exceptions with the Personnel Appeals Board to the determination of the Department of Personnel.

Appellant's position is located within the Facilities Management Department and he provides support and maintenance of the computer maintenance system. Appellant helps with configuration of software for individuals, troubleshoots and repairs operation problems, performs primary assessment of repairs, maintains backup for servers and workstations, upgrades operating systems

on workstations and network servers, configures new computers and network servers, and upgrades older computers and servers.

Summary of Appellant's Argument. Appellant disagrees with the determination that his position is properly allocated to the Information Technology Systems Specialist II classification. Appellant argues that he independently provides support and maintenance to the computer network maintenance system for Facilities Management. Appellant asserts that he provides standard and advanced technical support. Appellant contends that he trouble shoots systems, researches the problem, and repairs the problems as they are discovered unless the item is under warranty. Appellant argues that although he does not have delegated lead or supervisory responsibilities of full-time personnel, he directs and trains student staff who assist with computer support within Facilities Management. Appellant asserts that he independently sets his work schedule from general direction plans with the Information Technology Manager and requests from co-workers. Appellant contends that he has been an instrumental partner in establishing and implementing policies and procedures. Appellant argues that he researches products and places orders for new equipment. Appellant asserts that he is responsible for keeping track of the budget, planning system upgrades, and projecting the machine life expectancy and replacement schedules.

Summary of Respondent's Argument. Respondent argues that the impact of Appellant's duties and responsibilities is at the client and department level, rather than the larger, multi-functional level impacting university operations. Respondent asserts that even though Appellant provides support to some larger departmental projects, the primary area of his responsibility is to provide support to the staff within Facilities Management. Respondent contends that Appellant sets up maintenance schedules; however, this is based on a set of guidelines. Respondent argues that Appellant does not have the authority to make decisions without supervisory approval. Respondent asserts that Appellant's work is in collaboration with the Information Technology Manager or the

vendors for items that remain under warranty. Respondent contends that Appellant does not act as an independent consultant nor does he conduct needs assessments. Respondent argues that Appellant's duties are at the Information Technology Systems Specialist II level because he performs troubleshooting, processes equipment, changes passwords, configures software, serves customer needs, and provides instruction. Respondent asserts that the majority of Appellant's duties, as a whole, fall within the scope and level of responsibility of the Information Technology Systems Specialist II job classification.

Primary Issue. Whether the Director's determination that Appellant's position is properly allocated to the Information Technology Systems Specialist II classification should be affirmed.

Relevant Classifications. Information Technology Systems Specialist II, Class Code 2406; Information Technology Systems Specialist III, Class Code 2407.

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. Also, a position review is not a comparison of work performed by employees in similar positions. 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 which best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of the position. Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

Because a current and accurate description of a position's duties and responsibilities is documented in an approved classification questionnaire, the classification questionnaire becomes the basis for allocation of a position. An allocation determination must be based on the overall duties and responsibilities as documented in the classification questionnaire. Lawrence v. Dept of Social and Health Services, PAB No. ALLO-99-0027 (2000).

For a position to be allocated to the Information Technology Systems Specialist III class, incumbents must spend a majority of their time working independently. The basic function and distinguishing characteristics for the classification state:

> BASIC FUNCTION
>
> Independently consult, and perform information technology systems specialist work such as designing, acquiring, installing, maintaining, and troubleshooting on client applications, hardware and software products, network infrastructure equipment, or telecommunications infrastructure, software or hardware.
>
> DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS
>
> Under general direction, independently design, acquire, install, maintain, troubleshoot, and provide consultation for system, application, project, telecommunication, or operational needs in an assigned area of responsibility. Use established work methods and innovative approaches to complete assignments and coordinate projects such as conducting needs assessments and evaluating products; creating installation plans; independently installing and configuring hardware/software; working with vendors to resolve problems; analyzing and correcting network malfunctions; instructing users; serving as a Lead; or serving as a technical mentor to lower-level staff. The majority of assignments and projects are moderate in size and impact internal or satellite operations, multiple users, or more than one group. Consult with higher-level staff and/or vendors to resolve complex problems.

The record supports the decision by the Director's designee that while some components of the Information Technology Systems Specialist III classification fit Appellant's position, overall his

responsibility does not meet the required level of complexity. Appellant does not spend a majority of his time performing work at this level because:

- Appellant follows established work methods and procedures to accomplish his tasks.
- Appellant's level of independence and use of innovative approaches is limited by the nature and scope of the majority of his work such as providing standard troubleshooting, preliminary diagnosis, and repair of operational problems such as changing user passwords, re-imaging systems, installing software, upgrading components of older computers, and maintaining backup and anti-virus systems for the servers and database systems.
- Appellant seeks assistance from Academic Technology and Users Services with advanced software configuration issues.
- Appellant does not use advanced hardware and software diagnostic tools to identify and refer or resolve problems to other staff.
- The nature of work related to conducting needs assessment focuses more on individual issues rather than in determining the overall unit's requirements.

Appellant has not met his burden of proving that his position meets the level of independence and complexity that is required of the Information Technology Systems Specialist III level.

Therefore, we support the decision by the Director's designee that Appellant's position does not meet the definition or distinguishing characteristics required for the Information Technology Systems Specialist 5 job classification.

The basic function and distinguishing characteristics for the Information Technology Systems Specialist II classification state:

<u>BASIC FUNCTION</u>

In support of information systems and users, perform standard information technology systems specialist work such as testing, installing, maintaining, and supporting client applications, hardware and software products, network infrastructure equipment, or telecommunications software or hardware.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

Under general supervision, follow established methods to consult, troubleshoot, and solve standard customer service, equipment, and technical problems on computers, telecommunication software and hardware or client/server applications such as: analyzing customer service and equipment needs; processing equipment and service orders; coordinating installations, moves, and changes; responding to and resolving trouble reports from users; writing specifications and developing reports; conducting software and system operation instruction for users; or serving as part of a problem solving team addressing more complex issues. The majority of tasks are limited in scope and impact individuals or small groups. Complex problems are referred to a higher level.

After reviewing the duties and responsibilities described in Appellant's position questionnaire, we support the decision by the Director's designee that Appellant's position best fits the basic function and distinguishing characteristics of the Information Technology Systems Specialist II classification. This decision is based on the fact that a majority of Appellant's duties reflect standard systems specialist work such as:

- responding to and resolving trouble reports from users;
- changing passwords;
- configuring standard software for individuals;
- upgrading components of older computers and servers;
- maintaining backup and anti-virus systems;
- assessing hardware repairs and determining whether repairs will be made in-house or by other technicians in other departments.

Conclusion. Appellant's position is best described by the Information Technology Systems Specialist II classification. Appellant's appeal on should be denied and the Director's determination dated March 11, 2003, should be affirmed.

ORDER

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the appeal on exceptions by Don Loughmiller is denied and the Director's determination dated March 11, 2003, is affirmed. A copy is attached.

DATED this _____ day of _____, 2003.

WASHINGTON STATE PERSONNEL APPEALS BOARD

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Gerald L. Morgen, Vice Chair

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Busse Nutley, Member