

April 11, 2011

TO: Teresa Parsons, SPHR
Director's Review Program Supervisor

FROM: Kris Brophy, SPHR
Director's Review Investigator

SUBJECT: Ralph Webb v. Washington State University
Allocation Review Request ALLO-10-052

Director's Determination

This position review was based on the work performed for the six-month period prior to February 25, 2010, the date Washington State University (WSU) Human Resource Services received Mr. Webb's request for a position review. As the Director's Review Investigator, I carefully considered all of the documentation in the file, the exhibits, and the verbal comments provided by both parties during the review conference. Based on my review and analysis of Mr. Webb's assigned duties and responsibilities, I conclude his position is properly allocated to the Control Technician Supervisor classification.

Background

On February 25, 2010, WSU's Human Resource Services department received Mr. Webb's Position Questionnaire form (PQ), signed on February 24, 2010 requesting his Control Technician Supervisor (CTS) position be reallocated to the Maintenance Specialist 4 (MS4 or Engineering Technician Supervisor (ETS). On September 3, 2010, Kendra Wilkins-Fontenot, Sr. Human Resources Consultant, notified Mr. Webb that his position was properly allocated. Ms. Wilkins-Fontenot concluded the majority of duties assigned to the position met the CTS classification (Exhibit B-1).

On September 29, 2010, the Department of Personnel (DOP) received Mr. Webb's request for a Director's review of WSU's allocation decision (Exhibit A-1).

On March 3, 2011, I conducted a Director's review conference regarding the position allocation of Ralph Webb. Present during the call were Ralph Webb and Kendra Wilkins-Fontenot.

Rationale for Director's Determination

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. Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

Duties and Responsibilities

I reviewed the Position Questionnaire form (PQ) completed and signed by Mr. Webb and approved by his supervisor, Mr. Larry Neal, dated February 24, 2010 (Exhibit B-2).

Mr. Webb's position is located in the University's Maintenance and Utilities Services department. Mr. Webb works as a Control Technician Supervisor within Facilities Operations. Mr. Webb supervises Control Technicians and Electronics Technicians who perform installation, repair, maintenance and alteration of University facility HVAC, mechanical, electronic and other related Control systems.

Mr. Webb reports to Mr. Lawrence Neil, Maintenance and Utilities Services Manager.

In the position description form (PQ) submitted for reallocation, Mr. Webb describes his duties as follows (summarized from Exhibit B-2):

- 30% Monitors and enhances building operating environments to ensure optimal performance of CCMS system. Applies software patches and writes command procedures and programs to eliminate operating errors. Maintains, modifies, installs, tests, and debugs system level software such as the operating system, device drivers, and communications software. Provides maintenance and operation support, develops and implements emergency fixes and resolves system problems.

- 30% Oversees and supervises the daily activities of journey level technicians performing the installation, maintenance, testing, troubleshooting, and repair of a wide variety of complex HVAC systems, mechanical systems, control systems and alarm systems to support building and campus operations. This involves use of all types of electronic/mechanical test equipment, creative troubleshooting techniques and methods, personal computers, and programming software. Manages crew assignments of installation and construction and coordinates this work with other shops and contractors.

- 10% Works with vendor to identify and implement system upgrades, coordinates work with and/or oversees vendors responsible for installing hardware/software or telecommunications equipment and systems. Monitors system level agreement and manages software licenses. Assesses training needs,

determines training approaches and develop course materials.

- 10% Supervises the daily activities/assignments of electronics technician in installation, operation, maintenance, troubleshooting, and adjustment of CCMS system. Analyzes and corrects network malfunctions and replaces faulty hardware modules in network equipment as needed. Creates installation plans; independently install and configures hardware/software.
- 10% Reviews plans and specifications for new construction projects specifically to identify maintenance/accessibility advantages and disadvantages and feasibility of efficient/effective building operation.
- 5% Coordinates work with other shops and instructs users and computer support staff. Performs duties of supervises staff and related duties required by organizational needs. Develops and disseminates instructions and information to unit personnel.
- 5% Participates in development of annual service agreement including negotiations on repair parts pricing, hardware maintenance, software enhancements, and capital purchases.

Summary of WSU's reasoning

WSU asserts the primary focus of Mr. Webb's position involves supervising Control and Electronics Technicians work involved in the design, programming and configuration of a variety of building control systems. WSU asserts his position does not meet the Maintenance Supervisor 4 position because he does not work with a variety of journey trades workers or general maintenance mechanics performing work on physical plant, campus buildings, grounds, or equipment. WSU contends Mr. Webb's position does not meet the Engineering Supervisor class because his position does not involve working with engineers or scientists within an engineering, scientific, or instructional application.

Summary of Mr. Webb's Perspective

Mr. Webb asserts his position reaches the Engineering Supervisor class by providing technical design and project development support to Engineers and research personnel during WSU campus building construction and/or research projects. Mr. Webb asserts he reviews plans and specifications and assists with new construction projects to ensure building or research application control systems are adequate to make research projects work properly. Mr. Webb asserts he implements innovative solutions for proper control of system operation.

Mr. Webb asserts he provides technical support to Engineers and Research personnel because Facilities Operations and Capital Planning do not have an Instrumentation/Controls Engineer. Mr. Webb further asserts his position performs similar duties to other supervisors in the Facilities Operations Maintenance Group that are currently allocated as Maintenance Specialist 4.

Comparison of Duties to Class Specifications

When comparing the assignment of work and level of responsibility to the available class specifications, the class series concept (if one exists) followed by definition and distinguishing characteristics are primary considerations. While examples of typical work identified in a class specification do not form the basis for an allocation, they lend support to the work envisioned within a classification.

In Byrnes v. Dept's of Personnel and Corrections, PRB No. R-ALLO-06-005 (2006), the Board held that "[w]hile a comparison of one position to another similar position may be useful in gaining a better understanding of the duties performed by and the level of responsibility assigned to an incumbent, allocation of a position must be based on the overall duties and responsibilities assigned to an individual position compared to the existing classifications. The allocation or misallocation of a similar position is not a determining factor in the appropriate allocation of a position." Citing to Flahaut v. Dept's of Personnel and Labor and Industries, PAB No. ALLO 96-0009 (1996).

Comparison of Duties to Engineering Technician Supervisor

The Definition for Engineering Technician Supervisor states:

Supervise assigned personnel involved in the design, development and fabrication of various mechanical, electro-mechanical, hydraulic, pneumatic, or electronic instruments, apparatus, or equipment. Provide technical support to professional and technical personnel within an engineering, scientific, or instructional application.

The Distinguishing Characteristics for this class state:

Under general direction, with delegated authority, interview and recommend selection of applicants, conduct training, assign and schedule work, act upon leave requests, conduct annual performance evaluations and recommend disciplinary actions.

Provide technical support to professional and technical personnel within an engineering, scientific, or instructional application such as receiving work requests and reviewing drawings and schematics; consulting with engineers, faculty and staff on the design and fabrication of general and specialized instruments, apparatus and equipment; determining or recommending the choice of materials for use in fabrication; developing and implementing preventive maintenance programs.

The primary focus of Mr. Webb's position, and the majority of his duties as a whole, do not meet the requirements of the Definition and Distinguishing Characteristics of this class of providing technical support to professional and technical personnel within an engineering, scientific, or instructional application. He does not supervise assigned personnel who design, develop and perform skilled and precision engineering technician work constructing, installing, calibrating, and testing instruments, apparatus, or other specialized equipment in direct support of a scientific, instructional or engineering department. The thrust of Mr.

Webb's position involves supervising Control and Electronics Technicians who provide technical support to a variety of control systems and apparatus used in heating, ventilation, air-conditioning, and other environmental control systems.

Mr. Webb identifies in the PQ that he spends approximately 10% of his time reviewing plans and specifications for new construction and troubleshooting and identifying fixes to make the campus research building's environmental control processes work for research purposes. For example, Mr. Webb states in the PQ that he worked with contractors and staff regarding the new Bio-Tech building which had many design deficiencies and many air flow issues that directly impacted the building's research operations. Mr. Webb identified several corrections that were required to make the building's environmental control processes work within the parameters needed for research purposes. He also provided support to the manufacturer and Engineering department during the construction of the new research chambers in the Engineering Lab and Johnson Hall. The tolerances required for temperature and humidity control to support the research was beyond the standards that are normally dealt with in HVAC controls. He provided expert-level technical control systems support to the manufacturer and Engineering department in achieving those tolerances.

While a portion of Mr. Webb's duties involve providing technical support to the Engineering department in order to make building environmental controls work within the parameters needed to conduct research, the focus and scope of this support is directly related to environmental control and not research as intended by this class. Therefore, his position, while supportive to the Engineering department, is specifically defined within the narrowly prescribed context of providing technical support regarding building and other research facility environmental system controls. The nature of this work, along with his duties overall, is more appropriately described within the broader context of the Control Technician series.

For these reasons, Mr. Webb's position should not be allocated to the Engineering Technician Supervisor class.

Comparison of Duties to Maintenance Specialist 4

The Definition for Maintenance Specialist 4 states:

This is the supervisory level of the series. Supervises a variety of journey-level trades workers or general maintenance mechanics performing work on physical plant, campus buildings, grounds, or equipment; or manages the Department of Transportation Central Sign Shop and supervises the fabrication and distribution of all types of transportation signing throughout the state. Some positions supervise field operations on construction and maintenance projects either state-wide or for a specified program. Develop, implement, and monitor training. Implements and evaluates workflow priorities. Develops and disseminates instructions and information to unit personnel. Organizes, conducts and facilitates staff meetings.

There are no Distinguishing Characteristics for this class.

This class broadly describes positions which supervise a variety of trades workers or general maintenance mechanics performing work on physical plant, campus buildings, grounds, or equipment. While it is true Mr. Webb supervises more than one trades class, the thrust of his position, and the majority of his duties as a whole, are more narrowly focused, principally involving the supervision of control and electronics technicians involved with the installation, maintenance, testing, troubleshooting, and repair of building and other control systems. Mr. Webb supervises Control Technicians and Electronics Technicians. He does not supervise a variety of trades workers or general maintenance mechanics performing work across a broader spectrum of general plant facilities and equipment.

Mr. Webb's position does not meet the requirements of the Definition and Distinguishing Characteristics for this class. For these reasons, his position should not be allocated to Maintenance Specialist 4.

Comparison of Duties to Control Technician Supervisor

The Definition for this class states:

This is the supervisory level. Positions supervise control technicians and other assigned personnel. Positions function as a recognized expert who is sought out by others to complete major projects or resolve highly complex problems. Directs shop activities. Assists in overseeing the operation and maintenance of a central control and monitoring system. Assists in the development of departmental budgets.

The overall scope and level of responsibility of Mr. Webb's position closely matches the Definition for this class. The primary purpose of Mr. Webb's position is to supervise control technicians and other assigned personnel (i.e. Electronic Technicians) performing work directly related to various building environmental and other control systems. Mr. Webb directs shop activities related to the installation, repair, maintenance and alteration of HVAC systems, including control valves, electronics equipment, processors, computer software, instrumentation, building operational coordination, and other minor systems at the Pullman campus. Mr. Webb serves as the University's recognized expert for control systems and provides technical support to contractors and University staff for completing major construction and other projects requiring close tolerance environmental controls.

Although the examples of work do not form the basis for an allocation, they lend support to the work envisioned within a classification. The following provides an example of the level of work assigned to the Control Technician Supervisor class, as stated on the class specification:

Supervises control technicians and other assigned personnel involved in inspecting, testing, servicing, maintaining and repairing various mechanical, electronic, pneumatic, and electrical control systems and apparatus....

Reads plans and blueprints; inspects projects to ensure compliance with local codes; determines scope of work, materials needed, and their cost and availability; consults

with professional staff on existing control system modifications and feasibility of proposed designs and makes recommendations and provides technical advice on control and mechanical system changes;

Assists in overseeing the operation and maintenance of a central control and monitoring system; supervises adjustments and recalibrations;

Orders materials and maintains inventories of required materials to support operations;

Assists in preparing departmental budgets, keeps shop records, and writes reports when required;

Enforces safety rules and maintains control of shop and laboratory activities according to established procedures;

The examples listed above are fully consistent with the majority of Mr. Webb's work as stated in the PQ regarding his assigned job duties.

Conclusion

If there is a general class that broadly encompasses the body of work, and another class which specifically describes the work performed, allocation to the specific class must take primary consideration. The Control Technician Supervisor class specifically addresses the body of work under review in this appeal. Since this class specifically describes the scope of work and specific duties performed by Mr. Webb, allocating his position to the Engineering Technician Supervisor (or Maintenance Specialist 4) is not appropriate.

This is further supported by Personnel Resources Board (PRB) decisions in which the Board has concluded that while one class appeared to cover the scope of a position, there was another classification that not only encompassed the scope of the position, but specifically encompassed the unique functions performed. In Alvarez v. Olympic College, PRB No. R-ALLO-08-013 (2008), the Board held that "[w]hen there is a definition that specifically includes a particular assignment and there is a general classification that has a definition which could also apply to the position, the position will be allocated to the class that specifically includes the position. [See Mikitik v Depts. of Wildlife and Personnel, PAB No. A88-021 (1989)."

Additionally, most positions within the civil service system occasionally perform duties that appear in more than one classification. However, when determining the appropriate classification for a specific position, the duties and responsibilities of that position must be considered in their entirety and the position must be allocated to the classification that provides the best fit overall for the majority of the position's duties and responsibilities. Dudley v. Dept. of Labor and Industries, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-07-007 (2007).

Mr. Webb's allocation is not a measurement of his performance. Rather, a position's allocation is limited to the duties and responsibilities assigned and how the majority of those

duties best fit into the available job classifications. During the period of time under this review, the majority of his work assignments are more closely aligned with the requirements of the Control Technician Supervisor class. Therefore, the Control Technician Supervisor classification best describes his position duties. His position should remain allocated to that class.

Appeal Rights

RCW 41.06.170 governs the right to appeal. RCW 41.06.170(4) provides, in relevant part, the following:

An employee incumbent in a position at the time of its allocation or reallocation, or the agency utilizing the position, may appeal the allocation or reallocation to . . . the Washington personnel resources board Notice of such appeal must be filed in writing within thirty days of the action from which appeal is taken.

The mailing address for the Personnel Resources Board (PRB) is P.O. Box 40911, Olympia, Washington, 98504-0911. The PRB Office is located at 600 South Franklin, Olympia, Washington. The main telephone number is (360) 664-0388, and the fax number is (360) 753-0139.

If no further action is taken, the Director's determination becomes final.

c: Ralph Webb, WSU
 Kendra Wilkins-Fontenot, WSU
 Lisa Skriletz, DOP

Enclosure: List of Exhibits

Ralph Webb v. Washington State University
ALLO-10-052

List of Exhibits

A. Ralph Webb Exhibits

1. Letter of appeal from Ralph Webb received by Department of Personnel on September 29, 2010.

B. Washington State University Exhibits

Cover Letter from Kendra Wilkins-Fontenot enclosing:

1. Allocation Determination letter from Kendra Wilkins-Fontenot to Ralph Webb dated September 3, 2010.
2. Position Questionnaire submitted by Ralph Webb received by WSU - HR on February 25, 2010. (Includes an email from Lawrence Neal to Sabrina Maria McPherson indicating agreement to the description of position duties).
3. Organizational Chart for Maintenance Services department dated August 12, 2009.
4. Position Description for Ralph Webb, position #104783.
5. DOP Class Specification: Engineering Technician 1 (538G).
6. DOP Class Specification: Engineering Technician Supervisor (538K).
7. DOP Class Specification: Maintenance Specialist 4 (596K).
8. DOP Class Specification: Control Technician (607F).
9. DOP Class Specification: Control Technician Supervisor (607H).