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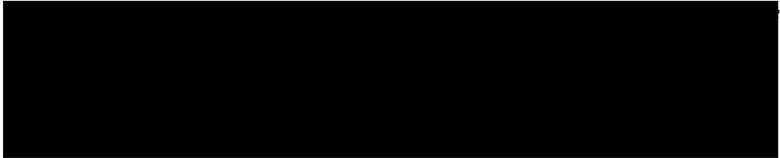
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U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Citizenship and Immigration Services

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ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS OFFICE
CIS, AAO, 20 Mass, 3/F
425 I Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20536



FILE: WAC 02 114 51445 OFFICE: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER

DATE: DEC 17 2003

IN RE: Petitioner:
Beneficiary:



PETITION: Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker Pursuant to Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

SELF-REPRESENTED

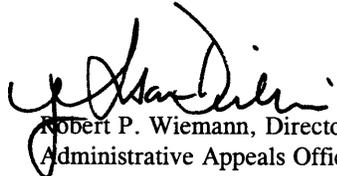
INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied or the analysis used in reaching the decision was inconsistent with the information provided or with precedent decisions, you may file a motion to reconsider. Such a motion must state the reasons for reconsideration and be supported by any pertinent precedent decisions. Any motion to reconsider must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider, as required under 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(i).

If you have new or additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reopen. Such a motion must state the new facts to be proved at the reopened proceeding and be supported by affidavits or other documentary evidence. Any motion to reopen must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reopen, except that failure to file before this period expires may be excused in the discretion of Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) where it is demonstrated that the delay was reasonable and beyond the control of the applicant or petitioner. *Id.*

Any motion must be filed with the office that originally decided your case along with a fee of \$110 as required under 8 C.F.R. § 103.7.


Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The nonimmigrant visa petition was denied by the Director, California Service Center, and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner is a software development and consultancy firm that currently projects employment of five persons and has a gross annual income of \$300,000. It seeks to employ the beneficiary as a software engineer (quality assurance) for a period of three years. The director denied the petition for failing to establish that the proffered position was a specialty occupation.

On appeal, the petitioner submits a brief and additional evidence.

Section 214(i)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(i)(1), defines the term "specialty occupation" as an occupation that requires:

- (A) theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and
- (B) attainment of a bachelor's or higher degree in the specific specialty (or its equivalent) as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.

The term "specialty occupation" is further defined at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii) as:

[A]n occupation which requires theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge in fields of human endeavor including, but not limited to, architecture, engineering, mathematics, physical sciences, social sciences, medicine and health, education, business specialties, accounting, law, theology, and the arts, and which requires the attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.

On the Form I-129, the petitioner listed the proffered position as "software engineer (quality assurance)." With the Form I-129, the petitioner submitted a letter of support from its business manager and a number of documents related to the beneficiary's education and work experience. The business manager's letter described the petitioner as a "market leader in technical computing, offering the world's most powerful servers, supercomputers and visual workstations." According to the letter, the petitioner wishes to employ the beneficiary "in the professional position of Member of Technical Staff - Engineering," where he will work "as part of a small team

responsible for all parts of product testing." Regarding the "Professional/Specialty Occupation" nature of the proffered position, the business manager also states:

[The beneficiary] will develop both black box and white box test specifications and test plans; participate in software design sessions in conjunction with engineering; and assist in the development of overall testing strategies. In addition, [the beneficiary] will participate in the execution of manual test cases; create, develop, maintain, and review test documentation; perform manual and regression testing on verified bug fixes; lead the development of detailed test plans and test cases in collaboration with the QA manager, development and other members of the QA and engineering team; develop automated tests using Segue's Skiltest; work with developers/designers to review and analyze product documentation; manage a laboratory of equipment dedicated to multi-performing testing; and verify the pre-release product documentation.

The director issued a request for additional evidence with regard to the proffered position's specific duties, level of responsibility, hours of work per week, types of employees supervised, and minimum education, training, and experience requirements. The request also asked for an explanation of "why the work done requires the services of a person who has a college degree or its equivalent in the occupational field."

The business manager replied with a letter which, after reiterating the Form I-129's statement that the position would be a full-time, 40-hours per week, discussed the percentages of worktime required for different duties, the position's level of responsibility, and "Why work to be done requires a person with [a] college degree or equivalent." The letter also noted that no supervisory duties are anticipated.

The letter outlined how the beneficiary's time would be expended: (1) "20%" in the "Generation of Test Plans/automated test suites"; (2) "35%" "Execution/verification of tasks" in the aforementioned duty; (3) "10%" in "Familiarity with system design & user/client requirements"; (4) "20%" in "Defect tracking/Regression Analysis"; and (5) "15%" in "Interface with and Consultation to In-house, User/Client staff."

In this letter, the business manager also stated that the proffered position is considered senior level in the industry, due to the complexity of tasks involved and "due to the fact that the position requires wide/diversified work experience, application of sound Engineering judgment, and ability to make and take decisions/actions within time constraints, and to work

on multiple projects at a time without compromising the integrity of work performance."

The letter states that the requirement for "a college degree or its equivalent (in the occupational field)" is evident from the description of the proffered position's duties. The letter also asserts that tasks three through five of the worktime percentage outline require a college degree in computer sciences or mathematics, while the other two require a college degree in computer science or its equivalent.

The director denied the petition because he determined that the evidence of record did not meet any of the specialty occupation criteria of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A).

The petitioner's brief contends that the proffered position's status as an H-1B specialty occupation is "overwhelmingly" established by (1) the position-offered description in the letter that the business manager submitted with the Form I-129, and (2) from the business manager's letter of reply to the request for additional evidence, the sections on the duties' worktime percentages and on the requirement for a college degree or its equivalent. The petitioner asserts that this evidence satisfies the requirements of at least the second and fourth criteria of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A).

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A), to qualify as a specialty occupation, the position must meet one of the following criteria:

(1) A baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the particular position;

(2) The degree requirement is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations or, in the alternative, an employer may show that its particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree;

(3) The employer normally requires a degree or its equivalent for the position; or

(4) The nature of the specific duties is so specialized and complex that knowledge required to perform the duties is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree.

It is important to note the type of baccalaureate or higher degree that a specialty occupation requires, as this is a central factor in understanding and applying each criterion of 8 C.F.R.

§ 214.2(h) (4) (iii) (A) .

Section 214(i) (1) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(i) (1), specifies that a "specialty occupation" is one that requires not only (1) the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, but also (2) attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher, or the equivalent, in "the specific specialty." Thus, the required degree must be in a specific specialty, that is, in a discipline that contains a body of highly specialized knowledge that is necessary for performance of the proffered position. 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h) (4) (ii) mirrors the Act by stating that the required degree must be in "a specific specialty." In this context, CIS correctly interprets "degree" in all of the four criteria of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h) (4) (iii) (A) as one in a specific specialty. This is a reasonable interpretation that is consistent with section 214(i) (1) of the Act. See *Tapis International v. INS*, 94 F. Supp. 2d 172, 175 (D. Mass. 2000).

Therefore, unless it is in a specific specialty, a degree or degree-equivalent requirement will not qualify a position as an H-1B specialty occupation.

The AAO applied these evidentiary principles in its consideration of the record, and they should be regarded as incorporated into the discussion of each regulatory criterion.

1. The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. As this burden never shifts, the petitioner is solely responsible for compiling a persuasive record.
2. Simply going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for the purpose of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. *Matter of Treasure Craft of California*, 14 I&N Dec. 190 (Reg. Comm. 1972).

As the following discussion will show, the evidence does not satisfy any of the specialty occupation criteria of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h) (4) (iii) (A) .

**I. Baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent as the normal minimum requirement for entry into the particular position.
-8 C.F.R. § 214.2 (h) (4) (iii) (A) (1) .**

The AAO routinely consults the Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook (Handbook)*, a comprehensive and authoritative source of information about particular occupations' duties and educational requirements. Here the AAO consulted the 2002-2003 printed edition, with specific attention to its sections on computer-centered occupations. The AAO determined that, as

presented in the record, the duties and responsibilities of the proffered position substantially comport with the software quality assurance analyst occupation, which the *Handbook* addresses as a subset of the "Systems Analysts, Computer Scientists, and Database Administrators" occupation, covered at pages 180 to 183. The *Handbook* specifically addresses software quality assurance analysts in this paragraph at page 180:

When a system is accepted, analysts determine what computer hardware and software will be needed to set it up. They coordinate tests and observe initial use of the system to ensure it performs as planned. They prepare specifications, work diagrams, and structure charts for computer programmers to follow and then work with them to "debug," or eliminate errors from, the system. Analysts, who do more in-depth testing of products, may be referred to as *software quality assurance analysts*. In addition to running tests, these individuals diagnose problems, recommend solutions, and determine if program requirements have been met. (Italics in the original.)

The *Handbook* treatment of educational and training qualifications for systems analysts, computer scientists, and database administrators, at pages 181 and 182, states, in part, that "there is no universally accepted way" to prepare for a job in this occupation. The *Handbook* states that, while "most employers place a premium on some formal college education" and many require a bachelor's degree, some may require only a two-year degree. The *Handbook* also notes that, although "many employers seek applicants who have a bachelor's degree in computer science, information science, or management information systems," persons "with degrees in a variety of majors find employment in these computer occupations." At page 183, in its "Job Outlook" section, the *Handbook* states:

[B]ecause employers continue to seek computer specialists who can combine strong technical skills with good interpersonal and business skills, graduates with non-computer science degrees but who have had courses in computer programming, systems analysis, and other information technology areas, also should continue to find jobs in these computer fields. In fact, individuals with the right experience and training can work in these computer occupations regardless of their college major or level of formal education.

Clearly, the *Handbook* indicates that the proffered position is not one that normally requires a baccalaureate or higher degree, or the equivalent, as a minimum requirement for entry, and, contrary to the petitioner's contention, the information in the business

manager's letters does not establish that the specific duties require a degree in mathematics, computer science, or any other discipline.

Accordingly, the petitioner has not met the criterion of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(1).

II. Degree requirement that is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations, or, alternatively, a particular position so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree.

-8 C.F.R. § 214.2 (h) (4) (iii) (A) (2).

A. Degree requirement common to the industry.

Contrary to the petitioner's contention, the record does not establish that the proffered position is one for which a degree in a specific specialty is commonly required in the industry and in parallel positions among organizations similar to the petitioner.

As discussed earlier, "degree" in this and all of the 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) criteria means one that is in a specific specialty whose highly specialized knowledge is required for performance of the proffered position.

As noted in the discussion of the first criterion of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(1), above, the *Handbook* indicates that there is no industry-wide entry-level requirement for even a bachelor's degree. The petitioner presents no documentary evidence to the contrary.

B. Degree necessitated by the complexity or uniqueness of the position.

Despite petitioner's assertions, the record fails to establish that the proffered position is either so complex or so unique that only an individual with a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty could perform it.

To the extent that the duties are enumerated, described, and explained in the record, they do not elevate the position above what could be reasonably expected of persons working within the systems analyst occupation addressed at pages 180-183 of the *Handbook*. The director was correct in not granting the petition under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(2).

III. Degree or its equivalent as the employer's normal requirement for the position.

-8 C.F.R. § 214.2 (h) (4) (iii) (A) (3).

The petitioner presented no evidence on this criterion.

IV. Specific duties of a nature so specialized and complex as to require knowledge usually associated with a baccalaureate or higher degree.

-8 C.F.R. § 214.2 (h) (4) (iii) (A) (4) .

The AAO has reviewed and assessed the full range of duties depicted in the record. Despite the petitioner's assertions, the duties do not appear so specialized and complex as to require the highly specialized knowledge usually associated with a bachelor's degree or higher in a specific specialty. In fact, the record contains no persuasive evidence as to why the duties could not be performed by a person with the appropriate experience, training, or coursework short of a college degree.

As noted earlier, without substantiating documentary evidence, a petitioner's assertions do not meet the burden of proof. In particular, the AAO did not find that the duties made the need for a college degree in mathematics, computer science, or any other discipline "evident." Also, despite the petitioner's insistence about their overwhelming evidentiary impact, the business manager's letters do not establish that the proffered position qualifies as an H-1B specialty occupation.

As related in the discussions above, the petitioner has failed to establish any one of the four specialty occupation criteria of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2 (h) (4) (iii) (A). Accordingly, the AAO shall not disturb the director's denial of the petition.

Beyond the director's decision, for whatever action may be appropriate at the director's level, the AAO notes that the record presented for its review does not contain a copy of a certified labor condition application required by 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h) (4) (iii) (B) (1).

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361, *supra*. The petitioner has not sustained that burden.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed. The petition is denied.