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U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

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FILE: WAC 03 206 52816 Office: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER Date: **MAY 11 2005**

IN RE: Petitioner: [REDACTED]
Beneficiary: [REDACTED]

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:

[REDACTED]

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office 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.

Robert P. Wiemann

Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The service center director denied the nonimmigrant visa petition and the matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed. The petition will be denied.

The petitioner provides residential care for the elderly. It seeks to employ the beneficiary as a part-time programmer/systems analyst. The petitioner endeavors to classify the beneficiary as a nonimmigrant worker in a specialty occupation pursuant to § 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b).

The director denied the petition because the proffered position is not a specialty occupation and the beneficiary is not qualified to perform a specialty occupation. On appeal, counsel submits a brief.

The AAO will first address the director's conclusion that the position is not a specialty occupation.

Section 214(i)(l) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(i)(l), 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.

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.

Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) interprets the term "degree" in the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) to mean not just any baccalaureate or higher degree, but one in a specific specialty that is directly related to the proffered position.

The record of proceeding before the AAO contains: (1) Form I-129 and supporting documentation; (2) the director's request for additional evidence; (3) the petitioner's response to the director's request; (4) the director's denial letter; and (5) Form I-290B and supporting documentation. The AAO reviewed the record in its entirety before issuing its decision.

The petitioner is seeking the beneficiary's services as a part-time programmer/systems analyst. Evidence of the beneficiary's duties includes: the I-129 petition; the petitioner's May 30, 2003 letter in support of the petition; and the petitioner's response to the director's request for evidence. According to this evidence, the beneficiary would perform duties that entail: planning, developing, testing, and documenting computer programs; analyzing user requirements, procedures, and problems to automate processing or improve existing computer systems; conferring with users to analyze current operational procedures and identify problems; analyzing, reviewing, and altering program to improve efficiency; formulating a plan and outlining the steps to develop computer programs; coordinating installation of computer programs and operating systems; testing, maintaining, and monitoring computer system; and conducting studies pertaining to the development of new information systems. The petitioner indicated that the beneficiary is a qualified candidate for the job because she possesses a baccalaureate degree in Optometry and professional experience in computer business systems and programming.

The director found that the proposed duties, which entail performing computer-related services to support the petitioner's normal business operations, are not so complex as to require a programmer/systems analyst. The director found further that the petitioner failed to establish any of the criteria found at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A).

On appeal, counsel states, in part, that the petitioner requires the services of a programmer/systems analyst to automate its business transactions, create customized computer programs for daily and long-term use, set up a networking system, and create a website. Counsel states further that these duties are so complex as to require a bachelor's degree. Counsel also states that the petitioner's current state of development warrants the need of a programmer-analyst.

Upon review of the record, the petitioner has established none of the four criteria outlined in 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A). Therefore, the proffered position is not a specialty occupation.

The AAO turns first to the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(1) and (2): a baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is the normal minimum requirement for entry into the particular position; a degree requirement is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations; or a particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree.

Factors often considered by CIS when determining these criteria include: whether the Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (*Handbook*) reports that the industry requires a degree; whether the industry's professional association has made a degree a minimum entry requirement; and whether letters or affidavits from firms or individuals in the industry attest that such firms "routinely employ and recruit only degreed individuals." *See Shanti, Inc. v. Reno*, 36 F. Supp. 2d 1151, 1165 (D. Minn. 1999)(quoting *Hird/Blaker Corp. v. Sava*, 712 F. Supp. 1095, 1102 (S.D.N.Y. 1989)).

The AAO routinely consults the *Handbook* for its information about the duties and educational requirements of particular occupations. The AAO does not concur with counsel that the proffered position is a specialty occupation. A review of the Computer Programmers job qualifications in the *Handbook*, 2004-2005 edition, at pages 98-99, finds that there are many training paths available for programmers, and that some programmers may qualify for certain jobs with an associate's degree or its equivalent. A review of the Computer Systems Analysts, Database Administrators, and Computer Scientists (Web Developers) training requirements, at pages 107-108 of the *Handbook*, finds that "[m]ost community colleges and many independent

technical institutes and proprietary schools offer an associate's degree in computer science or a related information technology field. Many of these programs may be more geared toward meeting the needs of local businesses and are more occupation specific than are 4-year programs." In this case, information on the petition indicates that the petitioner provides residential care for the elderly, has 14 employees, and an approximate gross annual income of \$716,000. No evidence in the *Handbook* indicates that a baccalaureate or higher degree, or its equivalent, is required for programmer-analyst of the nature described by the petitioner.

Regarding parallel positions in the petitioner's industry, the petitioner submitted Internet job postings for computer-related positions. There is no evidence, however, to show that the employers issuing those postings are similar to the petitioner, or that the advertised positions are parallel to the instant position. The advertisements represent industries such as information technology and transportation. The petitioner's industry, however, is not represented. Thus, the advertisements have no relevance.

The record also does not include any evidence from professional associations regarding an industry standard, or documentation to support the complexity or uniqueness of the proffered position. The petitioner, therefore, has not established the criteria set forth at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(1) or (2).

The AAO now turns to the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(3) – the employer normally requires a degree or its equivalent for the position. As counsel does not address this issue on appeal, it will not be discussed further.

Finally, the AAO turns to the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(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.

To the extent that they are depicted in the record, the duties do not appear so specialized and complex as to require the highly specialized knowledge associated with a baccalaureate or higher degree, or its equivalent, in a specific specialty. Therefore, the evidence does not establish that the proffered position is a specialty occupation under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(4).

As related in the discussion above, the petitioner has failed to establish that the proffered position is a specialty occupation.

The director found that the beneficiary was not qualified to perform the duties of a specialty occupation because she does not hold a baccalaureate degree in a related area. As stated previously, no evidence in the *Handbook* indicates that a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is required for a computer programmer/analyst position of the nature described in the instant petition. In this case, the record indicates that the beneficiary has computer-related training and experience. As such, the petitioner has demonstrated that the beneficiary is qualified to perform the duties of the proffered position. The petition may not be approved, however, because the proffered position is not a specialty occupation. Accordingly, the AAO shall not disturb the director's denial of the petition.

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

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