



STATE OF ARKANSAS
**Department of Finance
and Administration**

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
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August 19, 2015

Senator Uvalde Lindsey, Co-Chairperson
Representative Lanny Fite, Co-Chairperson
Uniform Personnel Classification and
Compensation Plan Subcommittee
Arkansas Legislative Council
State Capitol Building, Room 315
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Dear Co-Chairs:

The Office of Personnel Management submits a request from Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission (ALPC) for your review.

CERTIFICATION DIFFERENTIAL

The Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission is requesting approval of professional certification differential of up to 6% for the following classification listed below, in accordance with ACA 21-5-221, which states:

(i)(I) A professional certification differential of up to six percent (6%) for job-related professional certifications for individual positions or for specific classifications within an agency or institution may be authorized if the certification is:

(A) From a recognized professional certifying organization and is determined to be directly related to the predominant purpose and use of the position or classification; and

(B) Not included as a minimum qualification established or as a special requirement for the classification by the official class specification.

(2)(A) A professional certification differential may be paid only while the certification is current and maintained by the employee and while employed in a position or classification covered by the plan.

(B) Documentation of continuation or renewal of the certification of the employee is required for continuation of the certification differential.

ELIGIBLE CLASSIFICATION

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>CLASS CODE</u>	<u>GRADE</u>
ARLPC BOARD CERTIFIED PATHOLOGIST	B006N	N907

JUSTIFICATION

ALPC is requesting approval of professional certification differential of 6% to compensate two employees, which have obtained board certification by American College of Veterinary Pathologist (ACVP). There are only a few veterinary pathologists able to obtain this certification due to difficulty in passing the required examination. By approving this request will enable the agency to retain employment of qualified individuals.

The Office of Personnel Management has reviewed the agency's requests and recommends approval of the professional certification differential for this classification as described above. Your consideration of this request is appreciated.

Sincerely,



Kay Barnhill Terry
State Personnel Administrator



Chief Fiscal Officer of the State

AUG 05 2015

Date

KBT/AS: 1-2



ARKANSAS LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY COMMISSION

P.O. Box 8505
ONE NATURAL RESOURCES DRIVE
Little Rock, Arkansas 72215

Phone: (501) 907-2400
Lab: (501) 907-2430
Fax: (501) 907-2425
Website: www.alpc.arkansas.gov

Bruce Holland, Executive Director

August 3, 2015

Kay Terry, Administrator
DFA-Office of Personnel Management
1509 W. 7th Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

RE: Professional Certification Pay Differential

Dear Kay:

In May of 2014 I wrote you to request the establishment of a Professional Certification Pay Differential, of 6%, for Class Code B006N, ARLPC Board Certified Pathologist to compensate employees who have or obtain American College of Veterinary Pathologists (ACVP), or equivalent, board certification (enclosed). We have 2 positions authorized for this classification we proposed to only use this differential for these 2 positions.

At the time of my request, May of 2014, the minimum qualifications for the above classification did not require board certification. In fact there are very few veterinary pathologists who are ever able to obtain board certification because of the difficulty in passing the required examination. Additionally, at the time of my request, we were in the hiring stage for the vacant pathologist position that we had and our attempt to obtain this certification differential was somewhat of a "carrot" to the successful applicant to help her agree to move here and take the position.

Near the end of May 2014 I was contacted by Abby Simmons that the minimum qualifications for this position were being revised to require the board certification mentioned above and that my request for a certification differential would not be approved. We had already obtained a commitment from Dr. Virginia Charney to move to Arkansas and take our position with the understanding that we were "working on obtaining a certification differential for obtaining board certification". The "revised" official minimum qualifications for the classification of ARLPC Board Certified Pathologist were published on the OPM website on or around June 1, 2014 which was well after we had advertised and begun the hiring process.

COMMISSION MEMBERS

Monty Henderson, Fayetteville; Mack Hayden, Russellville; Rick Benson, Imboden;
Scott Sullivan, DeQueen; Ed Mabry, Batesville; Greg Hale, Little Rock; James Smith, Fayetteville
An Equal Opportunity Employer

August 3, 2015

Kay Terry


Page 2

Apparently we did not fully communicate to Dr. Charney that the requested certification differential was no longer in play after she had agreed to work for us. She has subsequently worked hard and obtained board certification by ACVP and had some expectation of an increase in pay as a result. As you will see from her attached letter to our Director, she is not happy about having no possibility of pay increase for achieving certification and she makes a strong case for reconsideration.

As a result of the above, I again ask for your consideration of a 6% pay differential as a result of obtaining ACVP board certification for employees in the Class Code B006N. If this request cannot be approved then I request a Labor Market Rate of \$87,500 for this Class Code if the employee or applicant has ACVP board certification or obtains it within 18 months of hire.

I am available at your leisure to discuss this request further if needed at (501) 907-2412. Please give this strong consideration and we will await your decision.

Sincerely,



Fred Wiedower

Deputy Director

Enclosures



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Phone: (501) 907-2400
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Fax: (501) 907-2425
Website: www.alpc.arkansas.gov

Preston Scroggin, Executive Director

May 8, 2014

Kay Terry, Administrator
DFA-Office of Personnel Management
1509 W. 7th Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

RE: Professional Certification Pay Differential

Dear Kay:

We would like to establish a Professional Certification Pay Differential, of 6%, for Class Code B006N, ARLPC Board Certified Pathologist to compensate employees who have or obtain American College of Veterinary Pathologists (ACVP), or equivalent, board certification. We have 2 positions authorized for this classification and would only use this differential for these 2 positions.

The minimum qualifications for the above classification do not require board certification and most applicants for this type position are newly graduated residents who have not sat for certification. Once one obtains certification, their earning potential will greatly increase and our best hope for retaining these highly skilled employees is to have the ability to compensate them with the pay differential we are requesting. Additionally, this differential may aid us in hiring applicants that have already obtained board certification.

We propose to increase the annual salary of incumbent employees in the above class by 6% upon their submission of proof that they have obtained ACVP or equivalent certification. For newly hired employees that submit proof of ACVP or equivalent certification, we propose to use base plus 6% as the entry level annual salary. This would not preclude us from requesting a special entry rate for Exceptionally Well Qualified applicants.

Thank you for considering this request and let me know if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Fred Wiedower
Deputy Director

COMMISSION MEMBERS

Greg Hale, Little Rock; Monty Henderson, Fayetteville; Mack Hayden, Russellville;
Rick Benson, Imboden; Scott Sullivan, DeQueen; Dale Dixon, White Hall; Ed Mabry, Batesville

An equal opportunity employer

June 23, 2015

Dear Mr. Holland,

I am writing to you to state my case as to why I believe that I deserve a raise after becoming a board certified anatomic pathologist following the start of my employment. The reasons are numerous, including the benefits and weight that being a boarded pathologist holds, statements that were made to me during my interview process, as well as the pay scale at The Livestock and Poultry Commission compared to states of similar costs of living.

The qualifying exam to become a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists (DACVP) is one of the most difficult, comprehensive, and rigorous tests in the veterinary profession, with reportedly only a third of applicants passing on their first attempt, many of whom never qualify. Becoming boarded is a validation of the knowledge, education, and commitment that a pathologist has to their profession. Per the ACVP: "individuals ... have appropriate knowledge, judgment and skills based on experience and the certification examination." While clearly no degree is necessary to achieve clinical competency (as there are wonderful and successful non-boarded pathologists), it still holds significant weight in the veterinary community. There is a dearth of veterinary specialists in the state of Arkansas, therefore there are very few places for general practitioners and producers to turn to when they need an expert opinion. I believe that being boarded is then a huge asset to the state, a veritable oasis in an otherwise desert of expert veterinary knowledge. I plan to speak with the Arkansas State Animal Control Association (ASACA) this September to help encourage neglect and cruelty cases to be brought to the lab in order to assist in the prosecution of suspects as an expert witness, I have spoken at a local sale barn to cattlemen regarding necropsies and sample submission, I have assisted with veterinary technician students from Heritage College visiting specific departments in our lab with both lecture-based learning and hands-on learning, and have been consulted on hundreds of cases by local veterinarians, producers, and animal owners. All of these activities raise the standard of veterinary medicine and animal care in the state, and "safeguard human and animal health, assure food safety and quality, and promote Arkansas livestock and poultry industries for the benefit of our citizens," per the stated goals of the Commission.

In addition to my board certification, I also spent my time during residency attending strenuous and challenging classes in order to obtain a Master's of Science in Pathobiology. This was no easy task, as I was expected to attend classes and study for exams while attending to the residency duties of a diagnostician, including performing necropsies, trimming in tissues, reading the histopathology, along with reading out biopsy submissions. Thus, in addition to the Bachelor's Degree and the professional degree Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, I have yet another degree in my field beyond the minimum qualifications for an anatomic pathologist.

During the interview process and over the past year, there have been significant discrepancies regarding proposed salary, raises, and expectations. During the initial job application process, it was made clear that board certification was preferred but not required. That being said, at the time that I had started the application and interview process, it was impossible for me to have been boarded (I had not yet sat for the exam) and have since been boarded within the year. Per an email from Dr. Meola on May 23rd, 2014, "we would have to start you at entry level which is the low end of the advertised pay scale (roughly \$83,000)" and that they were "working on an official mechanism to elevate the salary of any pathologist that passes the board while employed here. The increase would be a 6% increase in

annual salary. We hope to have that in place by the time our new pathologist starts.” This mention of “entry level” led to the reasonable expectation that if I start at entry level, that over time I would be elevated to a higher pay grade (one that is not “entry level”) based on experience in the lab, however I have since been told that this is not the case and that the only way to receive anything beyond a COLA raise would be to leave and come back. Additionally, I have also been subsequently informed that the application for the 6% raise for passing boards was declined sometime in May of 2014 (it is unclear if this was before or after it was mentioned to me.) I accepted the job with the expectation that this would happen or at least was still in the works, and have worked for almost a year with that expectation as well, unaware that it had been declined before I accepted the position. A potential 6% raise was a significant drawing point to this position over others to which I was applying and influenced my decision to take the job.

I have looked into the average pay for board certified pathologists at other states, some near us and others that are similar economically. Alabama Veterinary Diagnostic Lab employs boarded anatomic pathologists at a pay scale of \$81,000-\$113,000 (only one of whom is at the low end), Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab pays at \$107,000, Indiana Animal Disease Diagnostic Lab pays a non-boarded pathologist \$105,000 and a boarded, PhD pathologist \$110,000-\$140,000, and North Carolina Veterinary Diagnostic Lab pays around \$99,000. While it is impossible to compare states, labs, and employees directly, there seems to be a drastic disparity between these somewhat similar situations. While I realize that I am still an entry level pathologist, I believe that becoming board certified should bring my pay more in line with similar states, namely the previously mentioned 6% raise (from roughly \$83,000 to roughly \$88,000). This would serve multiple purposes: it would bring us more in line with similar states, make us more competitive in attracting and retaining talent, and would also create a distinction between boarded and non-boarded pathologists. This is essential to prevent animal healthcare and production to not fall further behind our neighbors.

I want to emphasize that I love being a pathologist and love working for the State of Arkansas. Dr. Meola and the rest of the staff have been wonderful, and I consider myself lucky to be able to be having such an impact on animal health in this state. You will find that no one gets into veterinary medicine for the money, but I would like to be compensated in a similar manner to other states for what a board certified pathologist should be making. As being board certified was not a requirement when I accepted the position of Anatomic Pathologist, obtaining this certification is worth more than my current pay grade.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Virginia A. Charney, DVM, MS, DACVP