

APPLICATION FOR THE 2004 LARRY L. SAUTTER AWARD FOR INNOVATION IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

University of California, Irvine, FastClass - Online Reclassification Process

SUMMARY

FastClass (http://apps.adcom.uci.edu/expresso/apps/components/fastclass/login.jsp) is a web-based system designed to streamline the formerly cumbersome process of reclassifying employees into more appropriate job classifications (and pay) when their position's responsibilities change or increase.

FastClass benefits two groups at once: FastClass supports the more than 130 business unit personnel officers charged with right staffing the units comprising the UCI community and retaining valuable human assets. Equally important, FastClass assists more than 4,000 career staffers with a streamlined, simple and equitable technological system to align job duties with the right job title and compensation.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Retaining top performers is a challenge faced by every organization. Employees need to feel that they are being recognized for their contributions to the organization. In the public sector, one method for ensuring proper recognition is to make certain employees are placed in the appropriate job classifications and pay grade. Ensuring proper classification and pay grade become even more critical in tight budget times when pay-for-performance increases are nonexistent. At the University of California, Irvine, the process of reclassifying employees into more appropriate job classifications was so complex and burdensome that the result was decreased employee morale.

The old process was paper intensive. It was criticized by our campus community as being cumbersome and complicated. Communication between the supervisor, employee, and the classification reviewer was nonexistent. Employees felt excluded from the process. Departmental autonomy lead to inconsistent implementation and review. The requirements for reclassification submission were unclear. The result was employee dissatisfaction and turnover.

Description of the Solution

In order to ensure that all concerns regarding the reclassification process were addressed, Human Resources solicited input from many campus representatives. All those who had a stake in the reclassification process were invited to provide their input and to help identify areas of high dissatisfaction and frustration. The performance of the reclassification process was then measured against client expectations and best practices of other organizations.

The first phase of this review was a web-based survey. The purpose of the survey was to identify client needs and satisfaction with the existing paper process. Those chosen to take part in the survey had submitted a reclassification to Human Resources within the last year or were considered a stakeholder in the job reclassification process.

The survey also measured current process performance and aimed to identify how technology could help streamline the paper-intensive reclassification process.

The second phase called for a campus focus group. The focus group was charged with brainstorming solutions for improvement of the reclassification process.

The findings of both the survey and the focus group reflected the perceived dissatisfaction with the old process. As a result, Human Resources determined that the reclassification process needed the following:

- reduced review turnaround times
- improved information sharing
- ability to track requests from submission to approval
- provision for on-line help
- integration with on-line tools
- greater support for those departments that process their own job reclassification requests
- must be paperless
- require minimal training
- provide a standard submission format
- provide analysis tools and guidelines to assist the user with the reclassification process

To foster campus acceptance, the design process solicited extensive campus input, utilizing a diverse and engaged team of representatives from campus departments to work on the process redesign and the Web interface design. Many of these same individuals served as the pilot user group to test and provide feedback on the system prior to campus-wide release.

FastClass was designed to require no classroom training. However, because FastClass introduced a new way of reviewing reclassification requests, Human Resources embarked on a publicity campaign to demonstrate the functionality of FastClass. Potential users needed a level of comfort with the new technology before actively using it. The system itself is easy to navigate with on-line instructions and pop-up helps where needed.

What makes FastClass unique to Human Resources systems in higher education is that it is extremely responsive to customer needs and wants—something that would be impossible with an off-the-shelf product, if one were even available. Before the decision was made to build FastClass, Human Resources and Administrative Computing investigated off-the-self products. However, software vendors were absent in this arena until today. FastClass addresses a technology for all employers, public and private alike. As a result, People Admin, a software vendor for higher education, has loosely modeled a new classification product after FastClass.

The Former Manual Process:

- Paper intensive
- Completed differently across the campus

- Unclear
- Viewed as "Black Hole"
- No centralized data available
- No centralized oversight

The New Online Process: FastClass (See Appendix C: FastClass Process Flow)

- Improved functionality
 - Web-based, paperless submittal process
 - Streamlined and standardized submittal
 - Built-in business rules for routing so users don't have to remember where the reclassification package goes next
 - o Integrated with other online tools for easy information lookup, e.g., UCI's Data Warehouse, UCI's Job Title and Pay Plan, UCI's Job Description Library.
 - On-line instructions and help text built-in
- Improved communication
 - Ability to track requests from submittal to approval
 - Automatic e-mail notification of progress
 - o Automatic notification letter generation
 - Automatic union notification process
- Improved reporting
 - Centralized data collection
 - Analysis report to track process bottlenecks

TECHNICAL SOLUTION (See Appendix D: FastClass Main Components and Appendix E: FastClass System Architecture)

On the backend, FastClass runs on Apache webserver and Tomcat Java Application Server environment and uses a relational database for persistent storage of data. A Sybase ASE server running on Sun Solaris 2.8 hosts the FastClass application. Web pages are generated using HTML, JSP, and JavaScript. JDBC is the database connectivity tool for Java. Java was selected in large part for its platform portability and vendor independence, which also makes it more feasible to implement FastClass at other sites. Although Sybase is the current database on the backend, the implementation could migrate to other relational databases with very few configuration changes because stored procedures and other vendor-specific calls are not used.

FastClass is J2EE compliant, built on top of the Expresso open source application development framework and follows the Model-View-Controller architecture with the Graphical User Interface separated from the Business Rules. FastClass utilizes the Expresso Framework for security and standardized application development. It also incorporates the DRALA Workflow Engine to orchestrate the workflow that defines the reclassification business process. Automating processes using workflow results in improved efficiency and increased throughput. Furthermore, the consistency that is enforced by a workflow engine results in more predictable system behavior. FastClass also relies on OpenLDAP and uPortal to surface the workflow tasks to campus Portal users.

ADVANTAGES OF NEW SYSTEM OVER OLD (See Appendix A and B)

The solution to dissatisfaction with the reclassification process was FastClass, an on-line reclassification submittal process. FastClass simplifies the process, reduces review times, provides more tools and resources, and enhances communication between supervisors, employees, and reviewers. With the development of the web-based submission process, reclassification of jobs was streamlined and standardized.

Specific process improvement measures include:

- *Cycle time* reduced from 60 days to 25 days and continuously improving. Some departments can complete the process in 3 days.
- Medium went from very paper intensive, often getting lost in the interoffice mail and stuck on someone's desk, to web-based with electronic tracking and automatic e-mail notifications.
- *Number of steps* involved in the reclass process dropped from six to four.
- *The number of approvals* required before even submitting reclassification request dropped to one from as high as three.

Of particular significance was the improvement in information sharing. What once was a cumbersome notification system was greatly simplified. Automatic notification, when appropriate, is made to the budget office and, if necessary, to the employee's union. In addition, appropriate letters are generated to the payroll processor and the employee. Supervisors, employees, and departments are automatically notified at each step of the reclassification process via the e-mail system including submittal, approval, or denial.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Positive feedback was received shortly after the release of FastClass in January 2003 from all users: employees, supervisors, and reviewers. Employees were especially gratified that FastClass empowered them to initiate and track their reclassification requests.

The following are examples of the unsolicited feedback received from our campus clients.

"...a simple, efficient, ...friendly process..."

"I love it! I love it! I love it!"

"What a simple, efficient, less hassle, computer friendly process Fast Class is!"

"I am very excited about it! Good job!"

Additionally, FastClass has received interest from other colleges and universities both with the University of California system and nationwide. FastClass will also be presented at the CUPA Regional Conference this October in Salt Lake City.

CONCLUSION

Faced with an inefficient and unpopular manual reclassification process, UC Irvine's Human Resources department partnered with Administrative Computing Services and the campus community to develop FastClass. Web-based and completely paperless, this new enterprise application drives a reclassification process that is both simpler and faster. In production now for the one and a-half years, FastClass has proven to be an innovative IT solution that successfully meets a critical campus business need.

PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

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RELEVANT LINKS

- FastClass Application: http://apps.adcom.uci.edu/expresso/apps/components/fastclass/login.jsp
- Reclassification Overview: http://snap.uci.edu/viewXmlFile.jsp?resourceID=287
- How To Complete Reclass Request: http://snap.uci.edu/viewXmlFile.jsp?resourceID=286
- Sample E-Mails: http://apps.adcom.uci.edu/expresso/apps/components/fastclass/webdoc/Sample Dept GK EMail1.doc
- Instructions for Department Gatekeepers:
 http://apps.adcom.uci.edu/expresso/apps/components/fastclass/webdoc/Dept_Gatekeepers
 Instructions.htm
- Instructions for Coordinating Point Instructions:
 http://apps.adcom.uci.edu/expresso/apps/components/fastclass/webdoc/CP_Gatekeepers_Instructions.htm

APPENDIX A



Class University of California, Irvine **FASTCLASS**

Process Improvement Measurements

	Before Redesign	AFTER REDESIGN
Cycle Time	60 days	25 days
Medium	Paper Forms	Web-based
Customer Satisfaction	Poor	Exceptional
Number of Steps	6	4
Number of Hand-Offs	5	2-3
Number of Approvals	2-3	1-2



University of California, Irvine FastClass

Process Improvement Functionality

	BEFORE	After
	REDESIGN	REDESIGN
Approach to data collection	Complete a multiple use	Question and answer
	form containing no	format or fill in the
	instructions	blank
Business rules	Personal knowledge	Embedded into the
		system
Data integrity edits	Few	Many
Mathematical computations	Manual	Automatic
Status tracking	Manual or None	Web
	Policies & procedures	Helpful hints and
User information	on paper or at multiple	policies & procedures
	web-site locations	embedded into input
		screens
System input capabilities	Manual – Supervisor	Supervisor, employee or
	complete paper form	authorized
		representative
Ad hoc reporting	None	Extensive
Medium	Paper forms	Web-based system
		Not necessary, the
Training	Necessary	system can "walk" a
		new user through the
		transaction
	Rare and usually not	Electronic upon
Budget Office notification	until year end and done	approval of request.
	manually	
	Initiated manually and	Notification occurs
Union notification	completed manually	electronically with a
		time stamp to ensure
		compliance with
		bargaining unit
		contracts.
Paper usage	Departments made	Additional copies not
	copies of transactions	needed because
		information is stored in
		database.

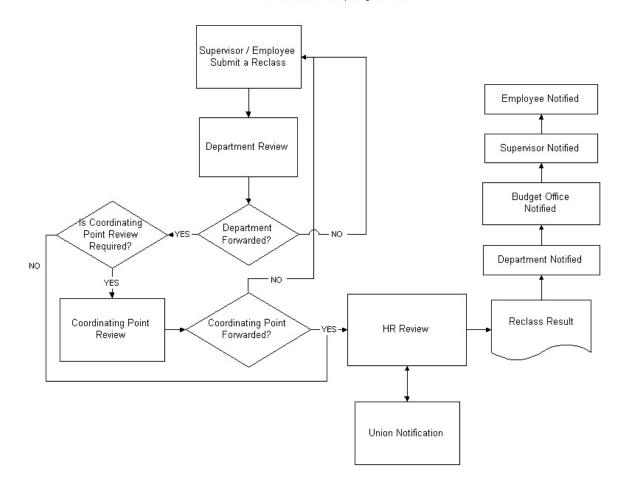


Class University of California, Irvine FastClass

On-Line Process Flow

FASTCLASS APPLICATION PROCESS FLOW

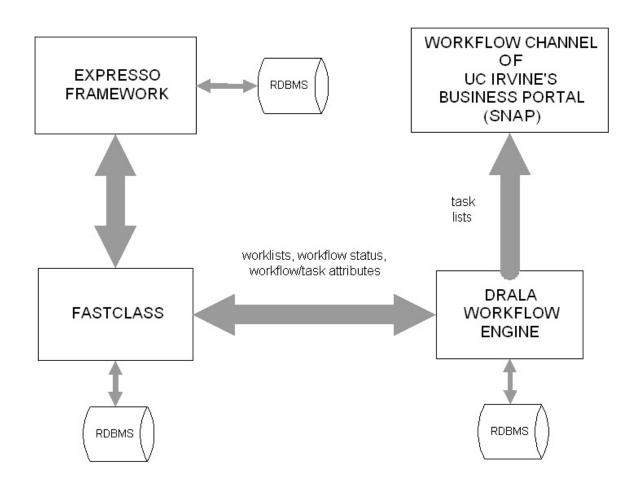
University of California, Irvine Administrative Computing Services



APPENDIX D



Class University of California, Irvine **FASTCLASS** Main Components

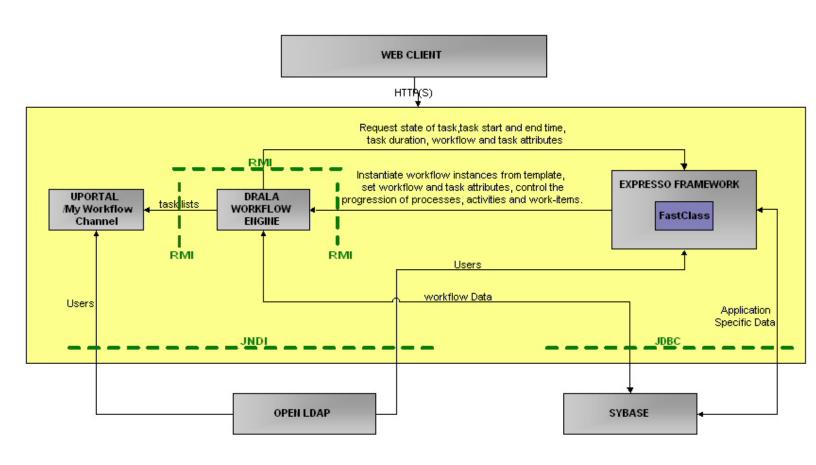


APPENDIX E



Class University of California, Irvine

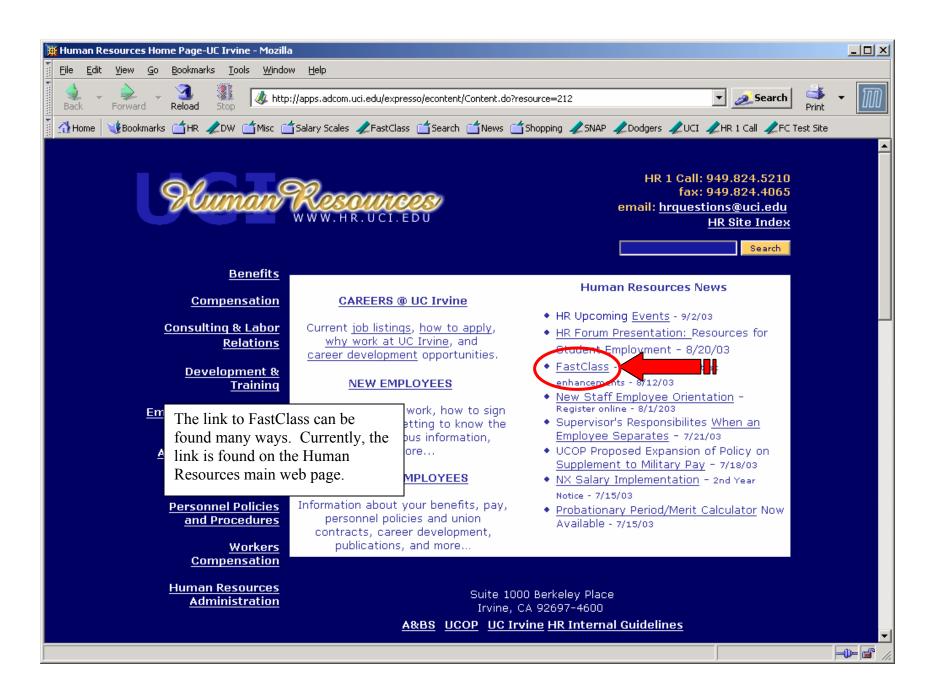
Application Architecture

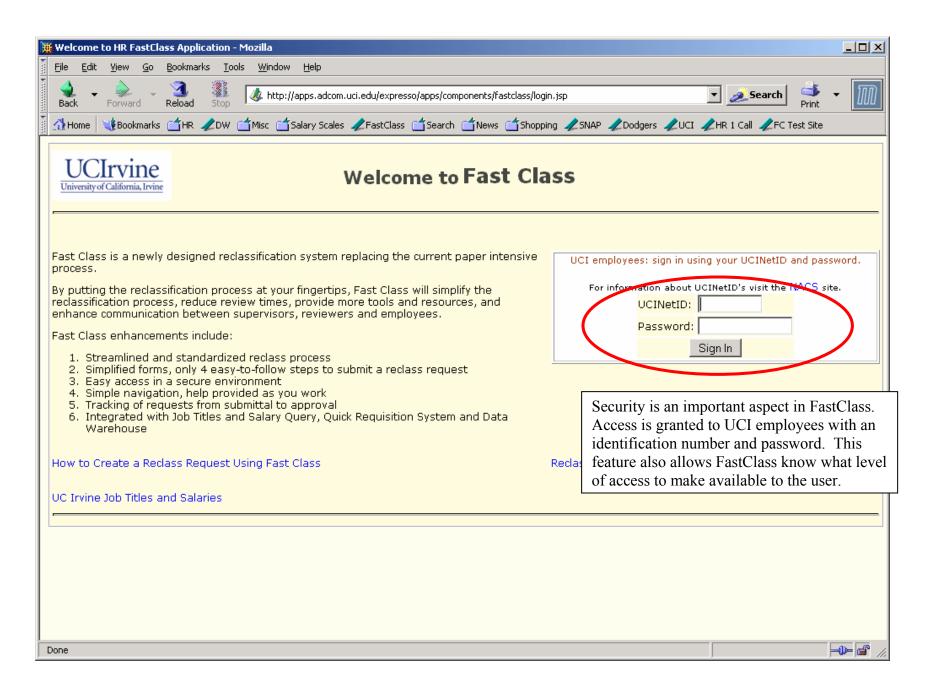


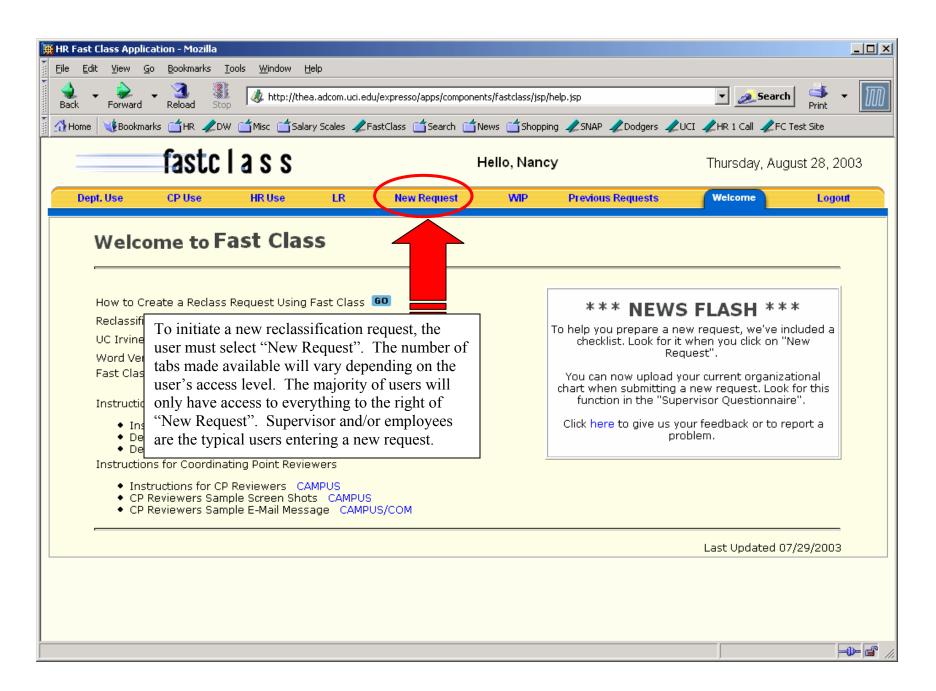
APPENDIX F

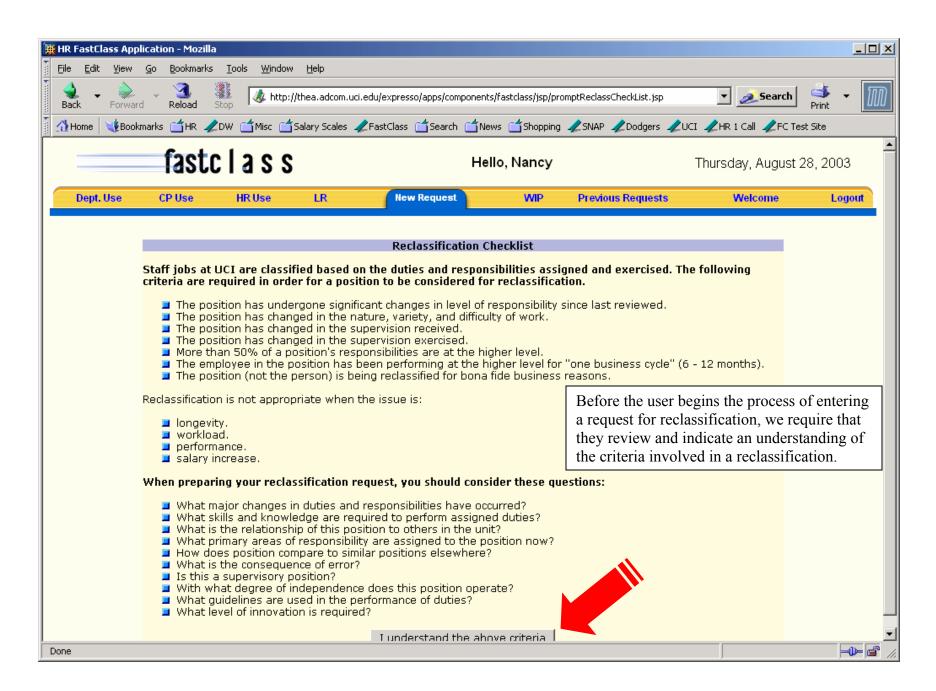


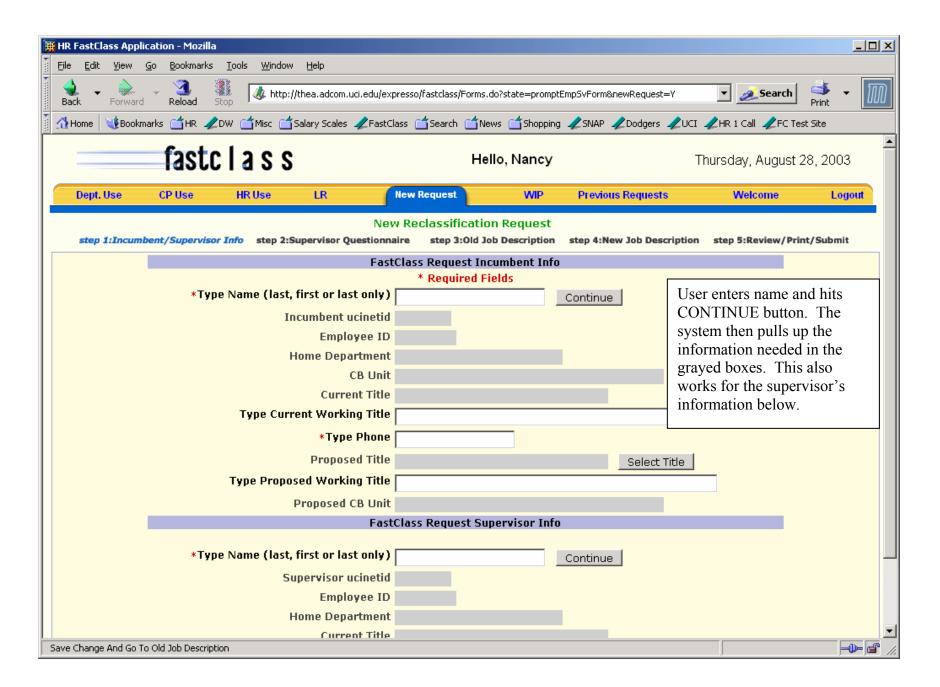
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE FASTCLASS User Guide

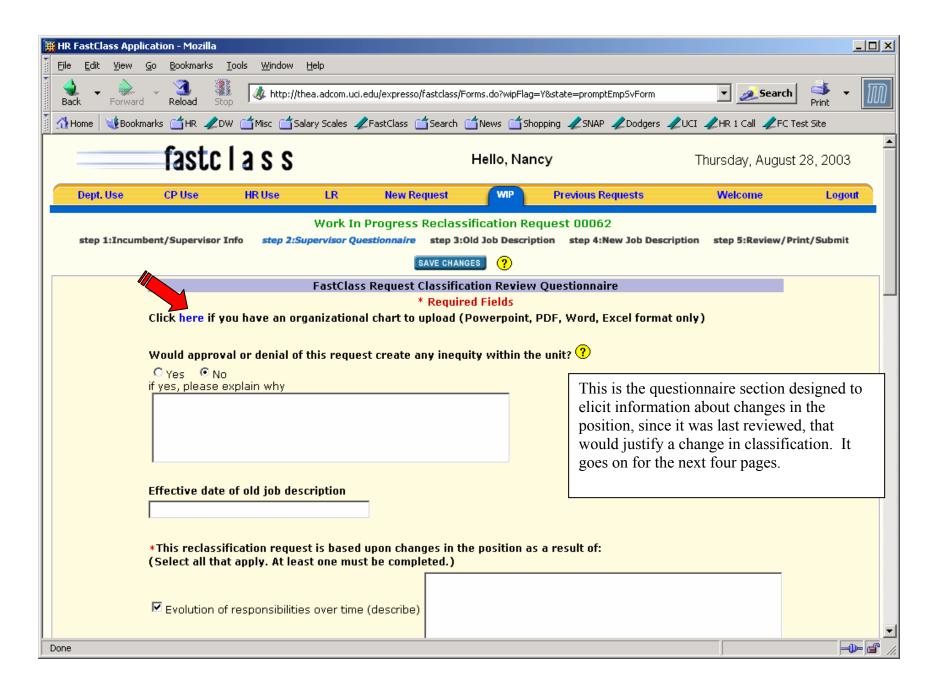


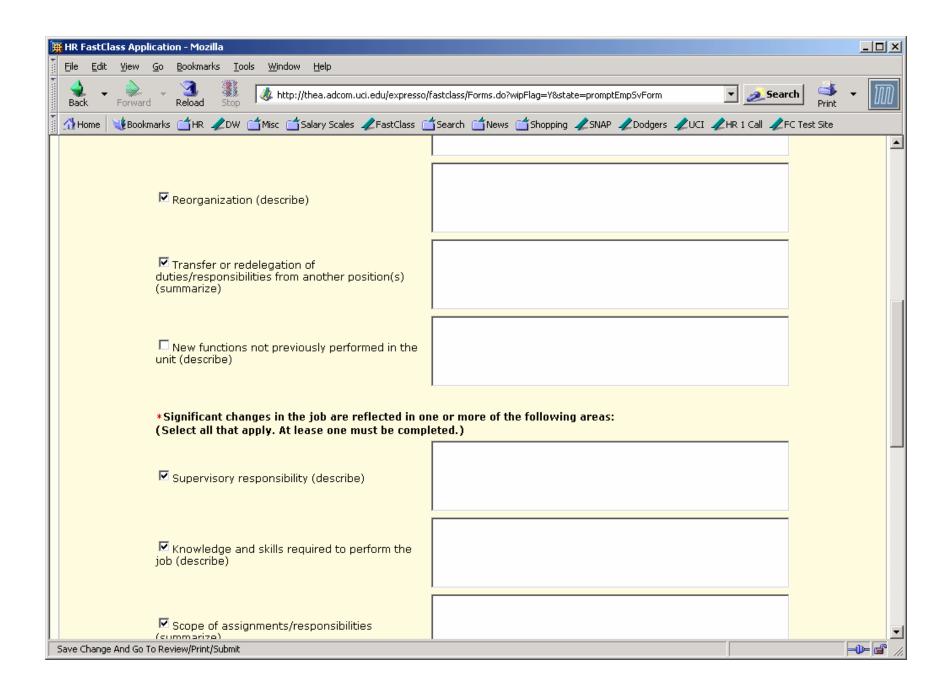


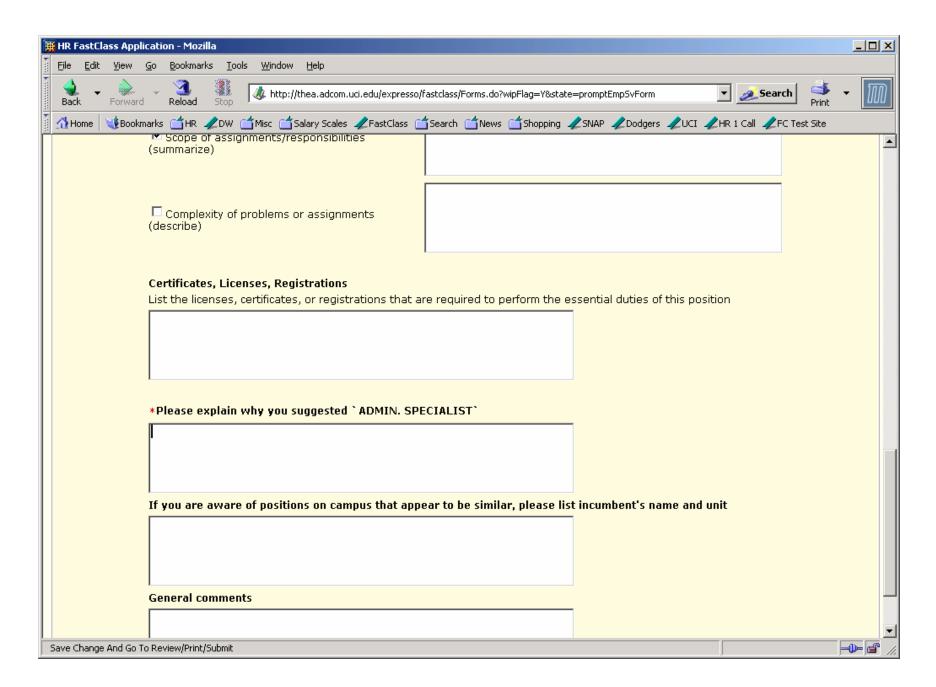


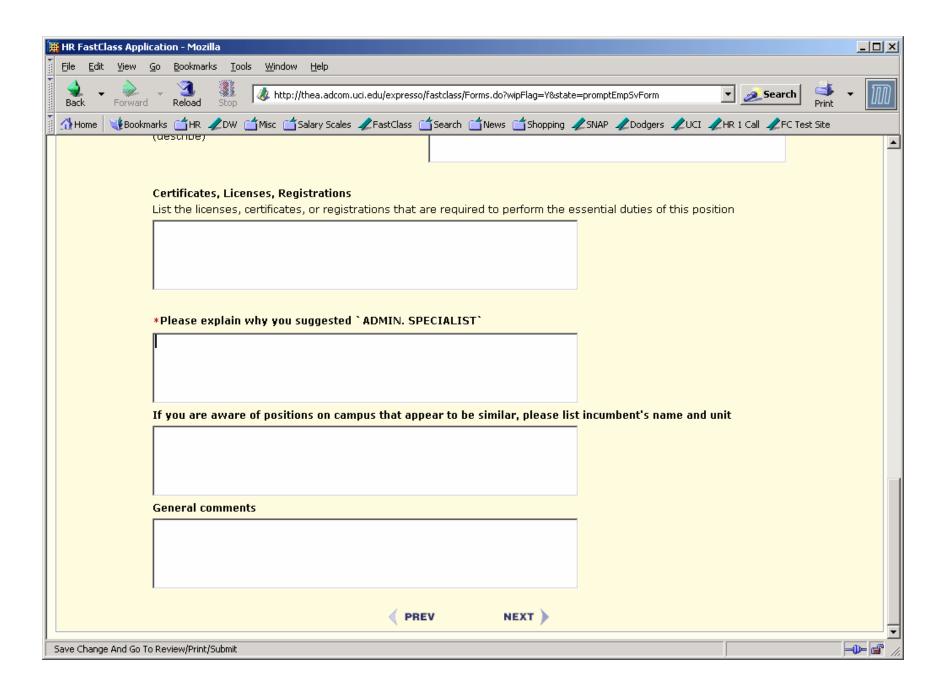


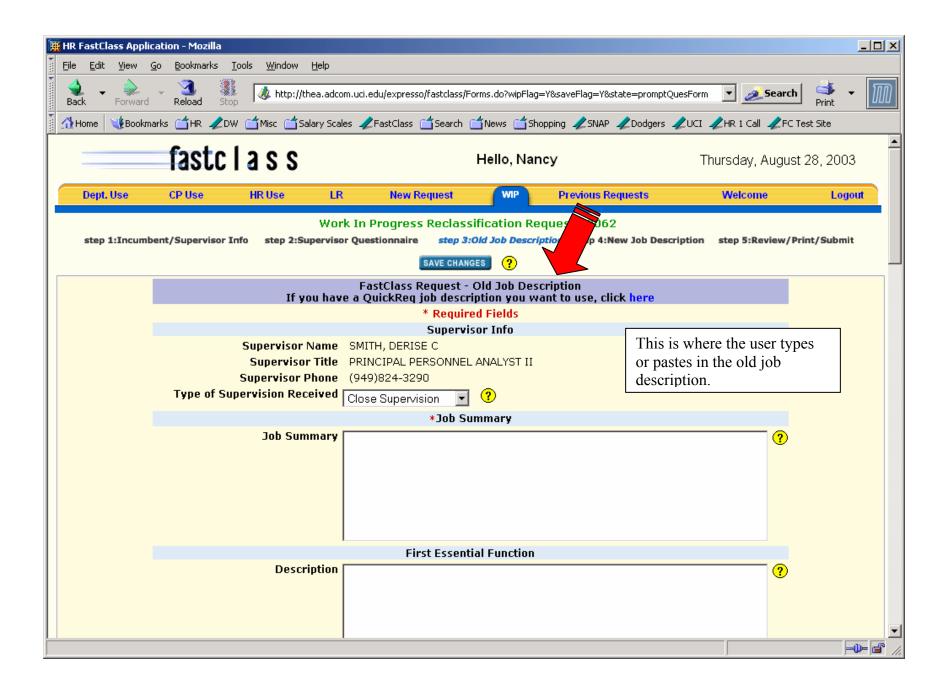


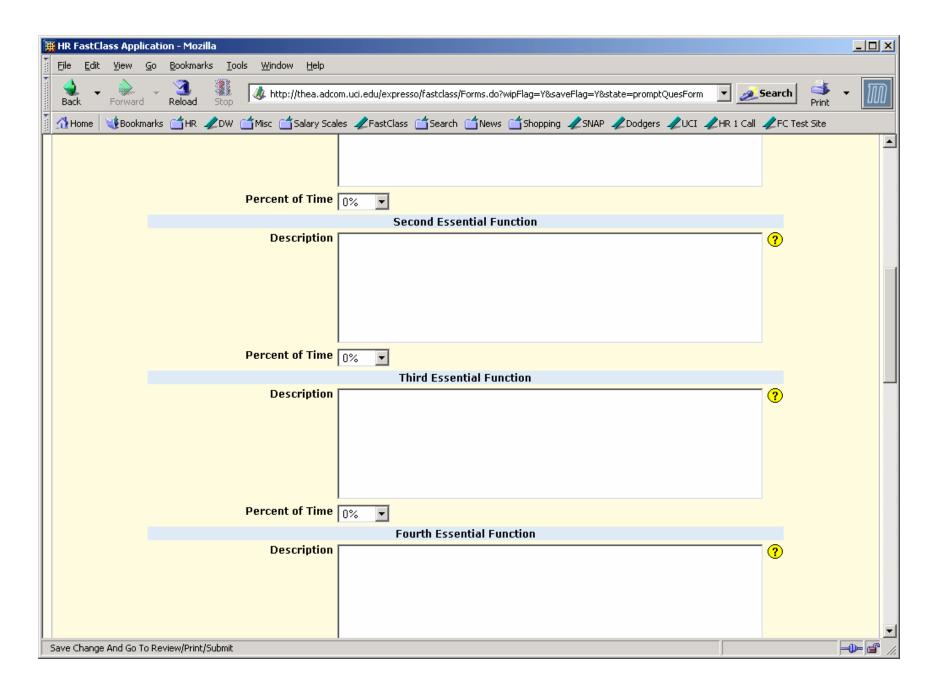


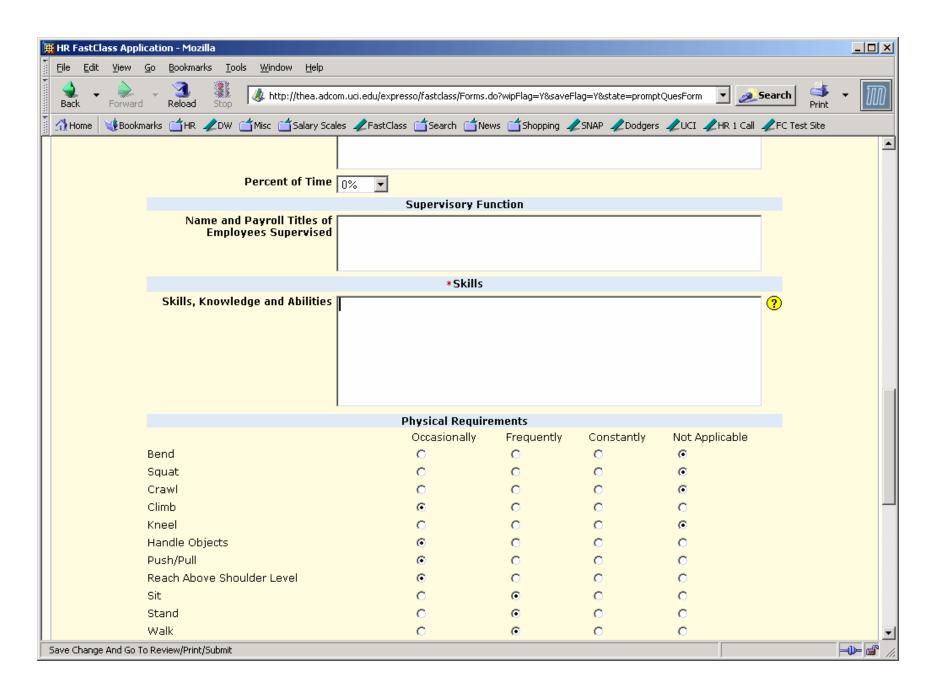


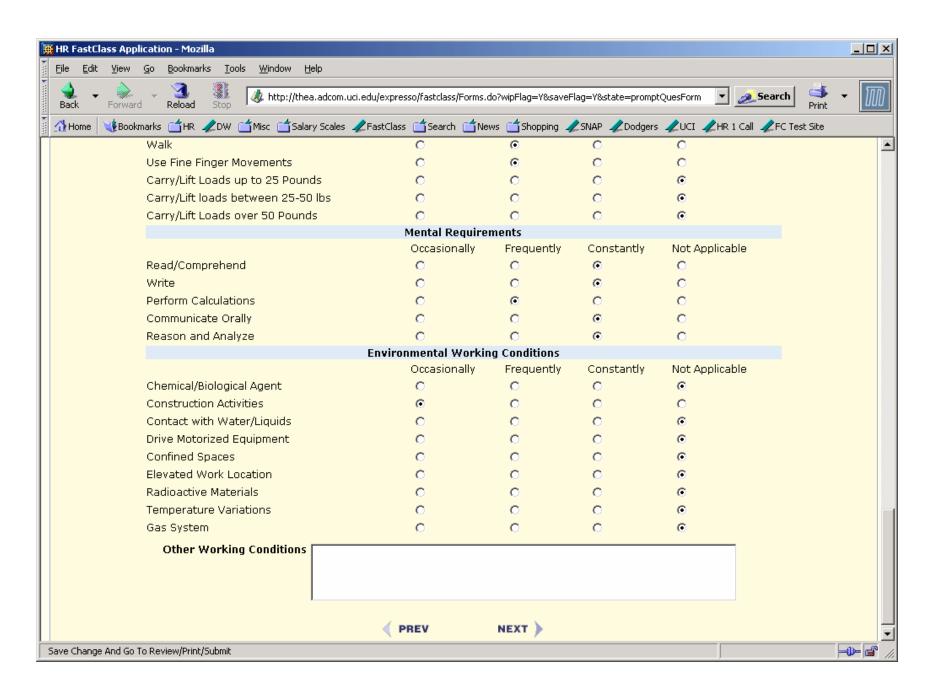












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