

PSH Graduate Manager of Campus Maintenance

Danielle Hollister
Staff Reporter

It doesn't seem that a man who goes camping, white-water rafting and mountain biking, sings professionally at weddings, and is a member of the Pennsylvania National Guard would have time for a job, but Paul Politza manages it all.

As a Penn State Harrisburg graduate, Paul Politza brings a unique view to his position of manager of maintenance and construction for this campus.

Ed Dankanich, who is director of facilities and Politza's supervisor, said, "It's interesting to see somebody who went to school here and now also works here. Paul brings a different perspective to the department. He thinks about the students' concerns. For example, with the design of the classrooms, Paul thinks about what's comfortable and what's appropriate for the students."

Although originally from Tyrone, Pa., Politza has been on campus for more than three years. He was a student and part-time worker for the maintenance department for the first two years and has held his current position for about a year.

Politza's part-time office position involved drafting work for renovations and preparing studies on maintenance operations.

Politza earned associate's degrees from the

Penn State Fayette campus in architectural engineering technology and building energy system technology. He earned his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering technology from PSH.

After receiving his bachelor's degree, Politza said, "Basically I was hired to renovate campus building drawings."

Politza also oversees campus building projects. He said he acts as the liaison between the contractors hired to do a job at PSH and the administration in charge of the project at University Park.

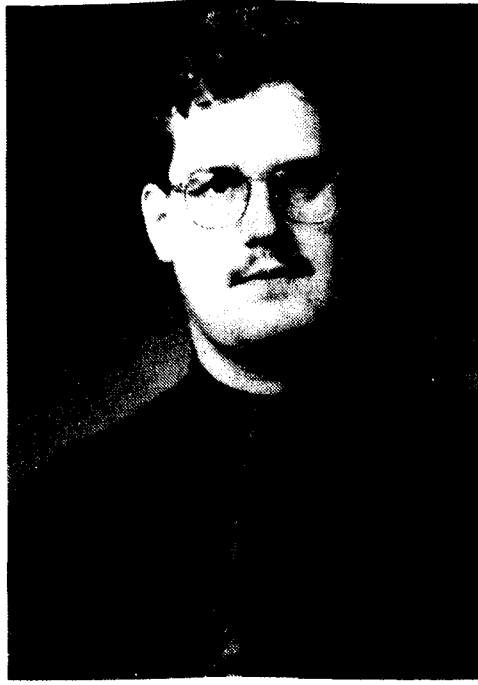
Politza is in charge of the project currently underway at the service stations by the dormitories. The project involves adding two additional service bays to the station. Politza said the expected completion date is May, 1995.

"The station is a facility that serves our vehicles and provides a customer-oriented fleet service for the instructors and faculty. We rent out cars for Penn State employees on official business," Politza said.

Politza supervises a maintenance staff of four. Most of the workers he is in charge of have been here a lot longer than he has. He said that factor combined with his young age can present a challenge for him, but he said he tries to promote teamwork.

His approach seems to be working, according to some of his employees.

A 19-year veteran maintenance worker, Joe



Paul Politza, Manager of Campus Maintenance

Kepp, said, "He's doing a good job with his men."

Donny Graves grounds crew, added, "He worked his way up as a part-timer and being a student to being a supervisor now. Paul is doing a good job at the service station."

Politza is also thought highly of by the two office assistants, Becky Amspacher and Linda Gingell.

"He's very organized and meticulous," Becky Amspacher, a staff assistant said. "He fits in well with the office."

"It's nice to see that he did better and got a full time job," Linda Gingell, another staff assistant said. "Paul has new and innovative ideas."

Politza partially credits his relationship with everyone for him being chosen for the manager position.

"I think the best thing I had going for me was that I knew the people," Politza said. "I was working with them. I think that's the strongest point, the combination of the job and the personnel."

Russ Conrad, the utilities manager, whose office is located next to Politza's said, "Paul's new in the department, fresh out of school, but he's fitting in real nice. He's a good manager and very easy to work with. He's good with his employees."

Politza credits his basic training in the National Guard for helping him to develop a lot of individual skills and the ability to work with people. This month marks the eighth year he has been in the military.

"I believe in team concept and that's what the army teaches you," Politza said.

As for his decision to go into the military on only a part-time basis, he said, "I love construction. I love buildings and when I was 12 years old, I knew that I was interested in some

type of building and architectural career."

He said that his decision to go to Penn State was the logical choice based on the strong engineering program and the locality of the Fayette campus in relation to his hometown of Tyrone. Politza said all of the engineering professors he has had were excellent.

Politza said the best thing about Penn State Harrisburg is, "you're getting a quality education. It's tough, but with the relatively small class environment, you're not so much a number. You can actually talk to the professor."

Aside from all that Politza has accomplished associated with Penn State, he enjoys camping vacations with his wife of three years, Michelle. She was his high school sweetheart and they dated for seven years before they got married.

They go camping and white-water rafting at the Ohio Pyle State Park in Pennsylvania. They also go mountain biking on a trail that runs right beside the river.

"I've been into mountain biking seriously for four or five years," Politza said.

He also enjoys singing professionally at special events. He said he will sing any style that the client wants.

"It's not for money and it's usually by word of mouth," Politza said. "Most of this occurred before we moved down here. I sang at my brother-in-law's wedding and that was really high stress, especially with the video camcorders rolling."

Interim Provost at PSH

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lications, Steve Hevner said, "Dr. Kiffer is just wonderful to work with. I don't know how else to say it. He seems to have fallen in love with Penn State Harrisburg. He's a very good leader."

When asked about his opinion of the previous administration, Dr. Kiffer said, "I will not make any comment about previous administrations. That's not why I'm here."

When asked if he had the authority to make lasting changes, Dr. Kiffer said, "I told Dr. Brighton that I would not come here unless I had that authority."

He doesn't know how long he will be here, but there are certain limitations because he is retired. According to Dr. Kiffer, under the Pennsylvania State Employees Retirement System, within one fiscal year he can work 95 eight hour days.

Dr. Kiffer said by spacing his days correctly, he can pretty much cover the semester. He thinks there should be a permanent replacement by fall.

"I would hope that the right person would be selected in a reasonable amount of time," Dr. Kiffer said.

When asked about the two candidates for the provost position, he said, "I interviewed both of them and sent Dr. Brighton my confidential assessment of both of them."

Dr. Kiffer said when a new provost is selected, he would give that person a list of things that really need to be done and he would also emphasize the importance of this institution to the south central Pennsylvania area.

Dr. Kiffer said that change takes place within Penn State at the speed of a glacier. "There is a lot of thought and planning that goes into what might appear to be a relatively mild change," he said.

When asked how Penn State Harrisburg can stand out, Dr. Kiffer said he is one of few people who has been part of the faculty and the administration both at two-year campuses and at University Park. He said that PSH occupies a unique niche in the PSU system and in the commonwealth of PA.

"There's an unusual blend and mix of students here," Dr. Kiffer said.

In his opinion, it would be a dreadful mistake to have PSH be



Dr. Theodore Kiffer

like University Park. He pointed out that University Park has been around for decades and PSH is only 28 years old.

"It hasn't matured as an institution," Dr. Kiffer said.

He said what we need to do at PSH is focus on our individuality and emphasize our good points.

"Most of the students I have met have told me personally that they're happy to be here," Dr. Kiffer said. "There is a perception that people are at Penn State Harrisburg because they can't be any place else."

He said that perception needs to be overcome with the students and the faculty and in the community and in the region.

"If it weren't for Penn State Harrisburg, there are lots of people who are getting an education who wouldn't be able to otherwise," he said.

Dr. Kiffer said he is going to work with all the members of the appropriate constituencies for the new library and he hopes to be a cheerleader in that arena.

"This is going to be one of the most up-to-date library facilities in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania," he said.

He said people shouldn't be afraid to make commitments. He told the story of how he met his wife as she was walking down the road and he passed as the passenger on a bike with his friend. Dr. Kiffer saw her and asked his friend if he knew her. His friend did, so Dr. Kiffer told him to turn the bike around and go back to introduce him to her.

Dr. Kiffer went home that night and told his dad that he had just met the girl he was going to marry. This fall they will have been married 49 years.

"I make commitments. I made a commitment that I want to do as much as I possibly can [while he's serving as interim provost]," Dr. Kiffer said.

When asked what he wanted to be remembered by at Penn State Harrisburg, Dr. Kiffer said, "I guess maybe that I didn't totally disrupt the place... No, that I somehow helped make it a more actively engaged learning community."

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