

S potlight

On Alumnus Stuart Cooley

Recently, I had the opportunity to catch up with Stuart Cooley, (B.S., '81), about his job as energy efficiency engineer for the energy and green building programs at the City of Santa Monica . He graciously talked to me all about being "green."

Being green may not have been easy for Kermit the Frog, but that's certainly not the case for physical sciences alumnus Stuart Cooley. He has had an interest in protecting our environment since childhood. And, as the grandson of the very first director of the National Science Foundation, Allan T. Waterman, science is in his blood. So, it's not too surprising the energy efficiency engineer is now making significant contributions to environmentally friendly science, specifically sustainable energy.

The Bethesda , MD native came to the University of Maryland in his sophomore year as a transfer student from Princeton University . He knew he wanted an education that prepared him for a career addressing environmental and energy issues, specifically renewable energy systems such as solar and wind powered energy. Cooley chose the physical sciences major to provide him with that preparation, utilizing its flexible and interdisciplinary program structure to form a curriculum that included environmentally-focused courses from several departments across the campus.

After graduating in 1981, Cooley stayed in the Washington , DC area for a while, working in a few jobs that left him feeling less than satisfied. So, he decided to look west, to places more in tune with the idea of renewable energy. He ended up in Hawaii , a state that had just made a pledge to be energy self-sufficient by the year 2000. (While it didn't quite reach the goal, it made significant progress that it is still continuing today.)

For the first five years, Cooley held a research appointment with the University of Hawaii , where he also earned a master of science degree and a graduate certificate in renewable energy engineering. He was also involved in the East-West Center , an internationally recognized research and education organization that promotes the establishment of a stable, peaceful and prosperous Asia Pacific community. In fact, he gained valuable leadership experience as president of the East-West Center Participants Association, which was comprised of about 300 student, post-docs and research interns. After earning his degree, he spent another five years working on similar renewable energy problems for Hawaiian Electric.

Then, when Cooley and his wife began planning for a family, the high cost of living in

Hawaii began to feel more burdensome and the prospect of living close to her Californian family became appealing. So, the couple moved to the San Francisco Bay area, also a good area for a thriving career in energy. For about three or four years, Cooley worked in energy consulting, primarily focusing on demand-side management tactics such as reducing energy use and increasing energy efficiency.

When Cooley began getting impatient with the energy consulting world, he found a position with the City of Santa Monica, also in California. The city's progressive attitude about both demand-side and supply-side energy was impressive and he has found the place so rewarding that he has been there ever since. In fact, he's proud to announce that Santa Monica is the first U.S. city to purchase entirely "green" (or sustainable) power. It does pay a little more, but it makes a statement to the rest of the country – and during California's recent energy crisis it actually saved money.

As an energy efficiency engineer, Cooley is also very involved with the construction of green city building. That is, new building projects that are constructed to use minimal amounts of energy and water and that utilize as many recycled materials as possible. In order to be certified as "green," the building must meet the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standard. Santa Monica's city-built constructions are now all required to meet a certain level of sustainability on the LEED standard, a goal that Cooley helps make a reality.

While most of his work is commercial, Cooley also recently had the opportunity to work on a residential project. 502 Colorado Court was a green, affordable housing project that garnered much attention nation-wide, in part because its architects won an American Institute of Architects award for its design. The project is also currently featured in the National Building Museum's exhibit on affordable housing here in Washington, D.C.



Cooley says that he likes working for the city, quietly setting an example for the rest of the country. And, even though he has had opportunities to make more money as, say, a computer programmer, he's glad he made the decision to stay in a field where he truly believes in the work. It's not always easy to find a career that one finds so personally and professionally rewarding, but it's clear that Cooley has.

When asked about his advice to students, his answer is also about efficiency, whether he realizes it at the time or not. He tells our aspiring young scientists to take advantage of all the resources provided by their University and their field. He recommends making the most of homework instead of just doing it to get it done and get a grade. "College isn't cheap anymore," he says. "That's all the more reason to make use of the resources while they are available to you."

If you have questions for Mr. Cooley, please contact the [editor](#). She will be happy to

pass your questions on to him.

Tel: 301.405.3401
1117 Physics Bldg.
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742

Contact the [editor](#).
Contact the [webmaster](#).

