

UCFS Board Member Profile: Keith O'Herrin

Name: Keith O'Herrin, PhD

City, State/Province, Country: Charlotte, NC, USA

Place of Employment: Union County/NC State Extension

Job Title: Urban Forester

Educational level and major field: BS and PhD Urban Forestry, Master of Public Administration

List any professional certifications:

- ISA-CA
- TRAQ
- CUFP
- NC Board of Registered Foresters #1941



List any other urban forestry, arboriculture, or related organizations you're involved with: Current Chair of the North Carolina Urban Forest Council

LinkedIn profile link: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/keithoherrin/>

Brief bio:

Dr. Keith O'Herrin is the Urban Forester for Union County where he focuses on tree preservation during development for 10 municipalities. His current position is also 50% NC State Extension where he focuses on arboriculture and urban forestry school programs. He is also the co-founder of TreesUnion, a tree planting non-profit. He received his B.S. from University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, M.P.A. from Texas State University, and Ph.D. from Virginia Tech. He has worked as a city forester for 18 years in rural Indiana, Austin, TX, the Chicago suburbs, and now metro Charlotte, NC. Keith has published research on tree preservation, municipal capacity, student recruitment, workforce development, credentialing, and assessment of the urban forest profession.

What makes you happy about being an UCFS member?

UCFS is the most urban forestry-specific professional society, so it's the society for urban foresters. I value being part of a community that is so directly focused on the profession, its challenges, and its future—and on connecting people who are doing this work across different communities and regions.

What got you interested in the field of urban forestry?

I grew up in the deep woods of rural SW Wisconsin (the Driftless Area) and had a family friend who was a forester growing up, which is how I knew the career existed. I went to UW Stevens Point for traditional forestry but quickly switched majors to urban forestry because it seemed like I could have more direct impact, and the two urban forestry professors were inspiring.

In what ways do you want to contribute to the [mission](#) and [strategic direction](#) of UCFS? Are you particularly interested in a certain area of board service such as governance, policy, outreach, financial oversight, etc.? Do you see any of your strengths being especially helpful to leading the organization?

My Ph.D. research focused on improving the profession of urban forestry to better support urban foresters/professionals. This included examining 10+ other professions to see how they do things and compare that against urban forestry, so I feel uniquely positioned to contribute to UCFS during this period of transition and growth. During my first 3-year term on this UCFS Board, I feel that we made excellent progress by intentionally building a bigger tent/broader coalition that spoke to more professionals. I want to continue this work to expand the reach of UCFS.

Favorite tree and why?

Swamp white oak because it's cooler than bur oak.