

UCFS Board Member Profile: Ryan Allen

Name: Ryan Allen

City, State/Province, Country: Altadena, CA, USA

Place of Employment: Dudek

Job Title: Senior Manager of Urban Forestry

Educational level and major field: Bachelor's degree in communications

List any professional certifications:

- ISA Certified Arborist #WE-10316a
- ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification
- ISA Certified Urban Forest Professional



List any other urban forestry, arboriculture, or related organizations you're involved with: The Los Angeles Center for Urban Natural Resources Sustainability

LinkedIn profile link: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ryan-allen-9186595/>

Brief bio:

Ryan Allen is an urban forester with 18 years' experience developing urban and community forestry programs with municipalities and community organizations. Mr. Allen's work focuses on ensuring that trees are properly managed, maintained, and preserved to help create resilient and healthy communities. Mr. Allen brings a wide range of urban forestry experiences with his typical day to day work including urban forest planning, tree ordinance development, tree risk assessments, and acting as an on-call arborist for cities. He uses these skills and experiences to help communities create a positive impact on their local environment and generate momentum for municipalities to make lasting changes to their urban forestry programs.

What makes you happy about being an UCFS member?

It's all about the community. We do a specific job that often requires a bit of explanation to someone who is unfamiliar with our profession. So, it's amazingly refreshing when I get to talk with a UCFS member and they just 'get me'. This was extremely evident when I got to attend MFI this year. Fifty or so strangers show up on a bus, and by the end of the night, it somehow feels like you've known them your whole life. We came from different parts of the country, different communities, and different lived experiences, but we all shared a passion for trees and people and wanting the best for both. And that's what makes me happy about being a UCFS member. I know that whenever I'm attending a conference, a virtual meeting, or a webinar, I'm with a group of folks who are on the same team, helping each other be great in our work and lives.

What got you interested in the field of urban forestry?

Like a lot of us, I had no idea urban forestry was a career option until I started doing it. After college, I joined AmeriCorps and served 2 years, working with nonprofit organizations and communities across the Northeast and Southern regions of the US. This got me inspired to work in the non-profit sector, but I hadn't found my niche yet. Then one day, I got hired as a tree care manager with the non-profit TreePeople in Los Angeles. I began planting and watering trees, working with volunteers, and educating community members, not knowing that what I did was called urban forestry. But the more time I spent doing the work, the more I saw the impact trees can have on people's daily lives and on the communities where they live. I realized I had found a career that makes a meaningful difference in the world and would always push me to keep learning and growing. It's also literally part of the job to go outside and look at trees. How could I say no?

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?

The UCFS strategic plan has several elements that I'd be excited to work on, but I see myself especially drawn to the 'Confidence' component because it aligns closely with my background and experience. Elevating urban forestry as a profession and industry is essential if we are going to be able to implement systemic changes nationally and in our own communities.

For the last 8 years, I've worked at Dudek and have supported more than 50 urban forestry planning projects for municipalities across the country. Through this work, I have partnered with communities of varying sizes, resources, and environmental conditions to address challenges related to canopy expansion, tree preservation, community engagement, climate resilience, and sustainable program funding. These experiences have given me a broad understanding of the common issues facing urban forestry programs, as well as the ability to develop practical, community-specific solutions rather than relying on one-size-fits-all approaches. I feel like this experience will help me serve the UCFS members in advocating for our profession and the goals of UCFS.

I've seen that municipalities will almost always have a professional engineer or planner on staff and entire departments devoted to plan reviews and permitting. But when it comes to trees, maybe they have an ISA-certified arborist and almost never an urban forest professional. Conversely, when a municipality is fortunate enough to have a position that requires a certified arborist, it can be a hard position to fill. We need to continue growing our profession so we have the qualified professionals to fill vacant positions and the recognition that our skills and knowledge are essential to effective tree management, whether it's for a city, school campus, or single-family home.

Favorite tree and why?

I have two coast live oak trees that grow over my small cottage. While the acorns constantly dropping onto my roof can be a tad annoying sometimes, they provide tremendous shade in the summertime that helps keep me cool. It's also fun having the squirrels running around outside my window.