

Key Issue #12: Building Professionalism and Broader Access to the Field

Enhancing professionalism and increasing access to urban forestry is a core need in the next decade. The more communities recognize the multiple cost-effective ecosystem and human health services provided by urban forests, the more urban forests will become an essential element in community infrastructure. In turn, proper maintenance of urban forests to ensure that they are delivering these benefits will become a more urgent community priority, creating a need for knowledgeable, trained staff. Already many cities, companies and NGOs aren't able to fill tree care positions, and this demand is only expected to continue growing in the next decade. New training programs are needed in both academic settings, within communities, and among professionals, as well as the opportunity to learn about international arboriculture practices. Internship and professional exchange programs were suggested as a strong need, as well as developing urban forestry programs in urban areas, with outreach particularly to those that may be unfamiliar with the field and to increasingly diverse groups.

IDEAS FOR ACTION - Gaps, Needs, Opportunities

- Increase the funding base for urban ecology education programs in state universities.
- Increase the number of UCF professional training programs at multiples scales including university undergraduate and graduate levels, continuing education opportunities for professionals in allied fields, as well as vocational tree care work programs in vocational schools or at the community college level. Connect these programs with real world UCF experience and training. Ensure that these opportunities include African-American colleges with programs such as the one at Southern University, which are key to engage traditionally underserved community members in urban forestry and arboriculture (*connected with Key Issue 13*).
- Expand existing successful private sector UCF professional training programs and college internship programs such as that offered by Society of Municipal Arborists.
- Rebrand and increase awareness about the tree care profession as it is not well known and is often misrepresented and as a result, there is difficulty recruiting people to enter this profession. Increase the connection around how the tree care profession is a “green job” and to federal programs around green jobs.
- Replicate the USFS Southern Region program of scholarships for urban forestry studies in other regions.
- Hold one significant UCF conference that has a large audience to create more professional cohesion, coordination, and collaboration, instead of multiple smaller conferences.
- Build on existing and new partnerships to innovate UCF educational opportunities with allied professionals such as planners, landscape architects, and engineers (*connected with Key Issue 3*).

- Increase awareness of the UCF profession so it has higher recognition and importance at the municipality level, within allied professionals, and the public. UCF professionals should be consulted when decisions within a community will affect the urban forest, such as clearing for a new roadway.
- Develop connections and collaboration opportunities with international urban forestry professionals, such as through the International Society of Arboriculture chapters abroad.