

## Justin Wisor

Director, Custodial & Grounds University  
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Los Angeles, California

**Justin Wisor oversees the Custodial and Grounds Divisions which operated separately at UCLA until August 2018. In the Director role, he has been working closely with University Departments to implement new strategies to better the UCLA's operational initiatives and support more sustainable practices including new methodology to eliminate herbicides as well as leading the UCLA Zero Waste Task Force. Justin is a 2011 graduate from the Pennsylvania State University where he received his Bachelor's Degree in Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management and 2009 AS, Business Administration. In 2014, Justin received his Educational Facilities Professional certification from APPA. He is a recent 2021 alumni, graduating from UCLA's Anderson School of Business with a Certificate in Executive Leadership and is a CA Certified Native Plant Landscaper. Prior to working at UCLA, Justin supported operations at the Pennsylvania State University.**



**1. Please share with us your life trajectory and why you took the position of Director of Custodial and Grounds at UCLA?**

After completing degree work at Penn State University, 2011 in Hospitality Management, and spending time in the private sector, I realized I wanted to do something with my career that would allow me to give back. Having a career in higher education helped me fulfill that goal by being able to provide leadership to an organization that is responsible for the beauty of a higher education institution both inside the buildings and out. It's hard not to be proud of your job when you work at an institution like UCLA, where you are able to engage in activities professionally like this with GLH, in being able to care of and share with the world a Ginkgo Tree from Hiroshima. Not many can say they've had that experience. The significance it has to not only our community, but the world. As of 2021, I'm able to share in this appreciation as an alumnus of UCLA.

**2. How did you learn about GLH and what are your thoughts on its effort to promote peace through plants?**

I first learned about GLH through Nassrine Azimi's visit to the Ginkgo Tree that was graciously donated and planted at UCLA in Los Angeles. Having this piece of history in our own backyard is not only meaningful from a historical perspective, but also is a symbol of hope and peace for



future generations. As many reflect upon this beautiful tree, the Ginkgo shares a story for all who visit it that, despite tragic events like Hiroshima, it sometimes takes only a seed to show that peace can be reborn and shared.

**3. Has the Ginkgo at UCLA had any impact on the community? What more can we do, to raise awareness of its symbolic significance?**

The Ginkgo tree is not only a beauty of nature added to the UCLA campus, but also serves as a reminder of our past, present and future. From a community perspective, having something so meaningful to reflect upon, while using it as a reminder of how to move forward in such unique times, is important to all generations, visitors, and community members who can enjoy the spectacular tree.

Personally, I would love to see local visitors and the surrounding communities, not only educational institutions, share in an annual ceremony to celebrate this piece of history right here in Los Angeles. Having an event showcasing its symbolic significance will spread, attracting many others to share in the value of its meaning.

**4. What were some challenges that you faced while managing the grounds of UCLA during the pandemic and what insight can you share about the changes, positive or negative, that it has brought?**

More than ever, individuals are turning to nature following the past few challenging years of the pandemic. Some of the challenges included functioning in such an unprecedented time and finding peace. One way we were able to overcome that was focusing on the beauty of our campus and allowing it to be an oasis of peace for visitors who came to enjoy our landscape and gardens. The pandemic really helped us to shift focus and to see that, even during times of uncertainty, you can find beauty in nature and the small things life has to offer.

The UCLA Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden



Feature edited by Saeeda Razick of GLH