



**Wisconsin Conference of the
American Association of University Professors**

Statement on UW System President Search

January 18, 2022

This past Friday, the UW System Board of Regents announced two finalists for the position of UW System President. Faculty, staff, students, and the general public now have a brief window of time to get to know the candidates before the Regents make their selection. Unfortunately, the Regents have chosen not to hold public sessions with the finalists. We believe that this is a mistake.

The search process for the new UW System President has been a dramatic improvement over the one that resulted in a failed search in 2019–20. Under its new leadership, the Board has restored the traditional role of faculty on the search committee. Shared governance representatives will have an opportunity to meet with the finalists and ask questions, another marked improvement over last time. Together with related changes to the chancellor search process (undoing several ill-conceived changes that took place under previous Board leadership), this has gone a long way toward restoring faculty confidence in the Regents.

It is puzzling, then, to learn that the Board will not hold public sessions with either of the finalists. Such sessions present a unique and valuable opportunity for people from across the UW System and the general public to hear from the candidates directly. Holding such a session for the lone finalist was the only good decision the Regents made last time. Whatever else may be said about that search, it is inarguable that the public gained valuable information, and that the end result was better for it.

Thus, while we applaud the Regents for the many improvements they have made to the process, we are disappointed in this unforced error at the end. We call on the Board to schedule public sessions with each of the finalists. We have no doubt that the two candidates would be up to the task. And if not, that would be important for everyone to learn before the Regents make a hiring decision.