



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

December 20, 2019

President Andrew S. Petersen
University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents
Office of the Board of Regents
1860 Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Dr.
Madison, WI 53706

Dear Board of Regents President Petersen:

I write today regarding the University of Wisconsin (UW) System Search and Screen Committee you appointed and charged with finding a successor to UW System President Ray Cross.

During my final Board of Regents meeting as an *ex officio* regent, I talked about the important role regents play in our state. I believe, as I have often said, that in order to do the good work of advocating for our kids, staff and faculty, and system, the regents should not be an extension of any administration, but should have the independence and autonomy to be able to carry out this important work. It has been and continues to be my goal as governor to give the regents this opportunity.

I also encouraged the board, however, to stay true to teaching, learning, and research—to support these fundamental values that are the fabric of the Wisconsin Idea, the UW System, and our state. It is because of these values that I write to express my disappointment and disagreement with your decision to depart from decades of past precedent by appointing a search committee that fails to include any non-regent student members, faculty members, or academic staff.

I have always been a proponent of more shared governance, not less. In 2017, the board voted to reduce chancellor search committee minimum membership to 10, of which half are regents. I was a lone voice against such a change, believing then as I do now that it was a solution in search of a problem. Reducing this presidential search committee membership by half of the 18-member committees appointed for the past two presidential searches is likewise a solution in search of a problem. There is a concerning dissonance in the notion that the search committee may be both “small” and “nimble” while being representative of “diverse interests.” Moreover, hosting listening sessions and a promise to receive input without meaningful, active inclusion is insufficient.

President Cross' replacement will be charged with the immense responsibility of strengthening, empowering, and managing one of the largest public higher education systems in the world. Our state's success depends on the UW System's success. Thus, by extension, in selecting the next UW System president lies perhaps an even greater responsibility. That is a responsibility that should be shared by a group representative of different perspectives and the people on whose success UW System depends—non-regent students, faculty members, and academic staff.

Today I write respectfully to urge you to reconsider your selection committee decision and to act swiftly to appoint representation from UW non-regent students, faculty members, and academic staff as we have in the past.

It is my hope that the next UW System president will be supported and championed broadly by students, faculty members, academic staff, and regents alike. Proceeding without all of those voices represented and belonging at the decision-making table risks undermining the important work our UW System should be doing to do what's best for our kids and our state while still staying true to teaching, learning, and research in the pursuit of the Wisconsin Idea.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Evers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Evers
Governor

cc: University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents