

# UW System: Special Regent Committee announces two finalists for UW System president

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MADISON, Wis.—The Special Regent Committee for the University of Wisconsin System Presidential Search has identified two finalists who have agreed to be interviewed for the position next week.

The finalists are:

- Jay O. Rothman, chairman and CEO of the law firm Foley & Lardner LLP in Milwaukee. He has served in that role since June 2011 and has been a member of the firm's Management Committee since February 2002. He joined Foley in October 1986 and has been a partner since February 1994. He earned a bachelor's degree from Marquette University and a law degree from Harvard Law School.
- James C. Schmidt, chancellor at UW-Eau Claire. He has served in that role since July 2013. Previously he was vice president for university advancement at Winona State University in Winona, Minn., and vice president for student affairs at Riverland Community College in Austin, Minn. He earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Winona State University, a master's degree in business administration from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, and a doctorate in educational policy and administration from the University of Minnesota.

Regent President Edmund Manydeeds III, chair of the Special Regent Committee, said the two finalists offer a depth and breadth of experience, including in the academic, business, and civic arenas.

“We have identified two excellent candidates, each of whom would be an outstanding leader for our university system,” Manydeeds III said. “We believe their qualifications and experience provide the committee a great opportunity to pick a future leader for the UW System.”

The finalists will interview Tuesday with the Special Regent Committee and other groups, including shared governance representatives, chancellors, and UW System executive leaders. Manydeeds and Search and Screen Committee chair Karen Walsh, the Regent Vice President, announced that because of the extraordinary public input in the process so far, there will be no public session with the finalists.

“Our diverse 21-member Search and Screen Committee included representatives from all universities and all campus constituencies, which helped us identify a list of viable candidates to forward to the Special Regent Committee,” Walsh said. “We also held numerous valuable listening sessions at all of the universities and with all constituencies – often more than one. We look forward to the Special Regent Committee completing its work.”

After the interviews, the Special Regent Committee will forward a recommendation to the full Board of Regents, which will make the final decision on hiring a new UW System President. A decision is expected by the end of January.

Biographical information and photos for both candidates are available online: [wisconsin.edu/presidential-search-2021/](https://wisconsin.edu/presidential-search-2021/).

Tommy Thompson has been serving as president since July 1, 2020. He announced this month that he would step down effective March 18. Thompson replaced former president Ray Cross.

The next UW System President will be the System’s eighth since 1971 legislation unified two public university systems under a single Board of Regents. The system educates approximately 165,000 students at 13 universities across 26 campuses, serves more than 1 million Wisconsin residents through statewide outreach programs, and employs about 39,000 faculty and staff statewide. The total estimated annual economic impact of the UW System exceeds \$24 billion.