



Media Release

For Immediate Release
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Rep. Shankland: Withdrawal of Finalist for UW System President Offers Second Chance for UWS to Do Right By Stakeholders

MADISON- Today, Jim Johnsen, the only finalist announced by the search and screen committee to succeed Ray Cross as University of Wisconsin System President, withdrew from consideration. In a [statement](#), he emphasized needing to prioritize his work in Alaska and time with his family, and added that the search committee “has important process issues to work out.”

Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) issued the following response:

“From day one, I have been vocal about my serious concerns with the search and screen committee process for UW System President. The committee broke with decades of precedent by deliberately excluding the voices of faculty, academic staff, university staff, and students and ignoring calls to course correct. Recently, they broke with precedent yet again by announcing only one finalist for the position. Now, the finalist has withdrawn, citing concerns about the committee’s process.

“It is understandable that a candidate would not wish to serve under these circumstances, with their legitimacy being questioned by shared governance stakeholders before they have even begun. This is what I said would happen in November 2019, along with thousands of other shared governance stakeholders. No one can say the committee wasn’t warned that their exclusion of the people most affected by this decision would backfire. While this entire process and outcome was dishearteningly predictable, this is a critical opportunity for the Board of Regents to learn from their mistakes. Now is the time to listen to our faculty, academic staff, university staff, and students and find a way forward that is inclusive, thoughtful, and deliberative.

“In these times of incredible uncertainty, we need a UW System president who is both committed to and able to earn the trust of all those who work for and attend our 26 UW System campuses. Mr. Johnsen’s withdrawal presents an opportunity for UW System to do better. I urge UW System leadership to take a hard look at their process and to be humble in finding a solution that truly respects the voices of faculty, staff, and students. Fair representation of shared governance in this process will create a better outcome for our vital UW System. The stakes are high: everyone benefits from a strong, resilient, and equitable UW System.”

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