This listening session took place on April 7, 2020 at 10:50. It was the third of five listening sessions and was hosted using web conferencing platform WebEx.

Regent Karen Walsh opened the listening session by asking Regent Jose Delgado to open the session with a question to the attendees. Regent Delgado asked how faculty and staff would sell the position as we search the nation for the next university Chancellor. Aaron, a staff member, indicated that the next chancellor must be able to come in and understand the situation that the university is currently in, the challenges the university faces, and someone that is interested in carrying out the goals that the university has set. Another staff member identified himself as Dave and urged the search firm to highlight UW-stevens Point’s sustainability as well as the socio-economic impacts that sustainability has in the state; someone coming in must recognize these ideals and be a change-agent. Gabby, another staff member (who is also a student at the university) seconded the calls for someone that values sustainability, but also noted that the next chancellor should respect the developed community relationships that the university has developed. Brian, staff member, reported that the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point is a valuable asset to the University of Wisconsin System as they have written the most grants in the past year of any comprehensive university in the system (outside of Madison and Milwaukee), the focus of which has been community and service grants (Brian reiterated Gabby’s comments about the connection to the community through grants).

Aaron suggested that the next chancellor should be someone that will be seen among the staff and students at events; Dyllan Griepentrog, the student representative on the committee, has heard the same thing from fellow students. Sylf, a strategist with the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center would like to encourage the committee to look at candidates that come from a background of diversity, equity and inclusion; Sylf identified themselves as a person of color as well as a queer person that graduated from UW-Stevens Point and is now a graduate student. Sylf indicated that there have been experiences on campus that are racist, homophobic, and transphobic; the next chancellor should be willing to take-on these issues at a largely hegemonic institution. When asked for clarification in how to potentially identify these potential applicants, Sylf stated that anyone that worked in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion would likely have the cultural background to satisfy these needs. Dave indicated that long-term sustainability will be helped by a diverse and inclusive campus. Dr. Nisha Fernando, from the Search Committee also discussed the many international students on campus and advised that many are socially isolated because of the COVID-19 pandemic and having a chancellor that recognizes the needs of International students is very important. A staff member named William also suggested that a chancellor would not just develop plans for diversity but would also see them through to implementation. Samuel, a staff member, agrees with William and wants to see someone brought on that would see implementation plans for diversity and inclusion. Samuel also suggested looking for a chancellor that would be interested in finding ways of increasing the population of faculty and staff of color. Sylf suggested to the committee to consider not just candidates of color, but also candidates that may be LGBTQ, or those that are disabled. Regent Walsh solicited Eric, a staff member with UW-Stevens Point, who identified himself as someone that is working with disabilities every day and would also like to see a candidate that supports Equity, Inclusion and Diversity.

A staff member identified as Amanda would like to see a chancellor that is an effective listener and communicates well with students and staff. Erin, a staff member in the budget office, suggested that the next chancellor should have a sound financial base and will use that to drive the decision making on campus. Regent Woodmansee asked for the top financial priorities that the incoming chancellor would face. Erin advised the chancellor should recognize that enrollment is the driving force behind revenue for the university and should be able to generate other revenue. Elsa, a staff member, suggested a chancellor that is forward-thinking with regard to education-innovations, someone that would work with the local business community, and someone that would look to retain the students and staff would be a good fit. An online participant suggested looking at candidates that understand and support the role of student affairs on campus.

Dr. Mary Bowman of the search committee asked for experiences that people could look for on a resume to ensure that someone has the necessary financial background to manage a campus like University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Brian suggested that the next chancellor must operate as an executive-level representative that doesn’t throw away what is working due to perceived inefficiencies. Another faculty member, Kit suggested a chancellor that will embody the Mission, Vision and Values of the campus. Heather, a representative from University of Wisconsin System Administration asked how we can identify that applicant. Kit suggested he couldn’t enumerate a specific question to ask but suggested that an elevator speech be prepared to sell UW-Stevens Point to potential candidates. Regent Walsh inquired if there are assets of Stevens Point that are not being communicated well. Kit suggested every campus has great people and are part of great communities, but the campus and the community need to be sold to potential candidates. A participant, Kimber suggested that the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point research is not being adequately represented and suggested the next chancellor should be aware of the research opportunities occurring at UW-Stevens Point. Brian chimed in and stated that the next chancellor should be able to understand higher-education finance and budgeting and how scholarly work can affect both priorities. Dr. Nisha Fernando added that the next chancellor should understand the current landscape of higher education and although there is currently a lot of focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), art and design cannot be ignored. The success of these programs can bring new students in and drive enrollment in new ways. Eric suggested that there are employees for UW-Stevens Point that live in half of the 72 Wisconsin counties, and UW-Stevens Point has facilities in five counties throughout the state. The next chancellor should be able to recognize the impact of having this kind of physical spread. William supported looking for a chancellor that has moved major institutions in a positive way using collaborative efforts. Dave would also like to see a chancellor that has the background in education that will highlight programs like theater and research opportunities. Brian would also like to highlight student-led and student-involved scholarly activities as part of communication about the university.

Regent Walsh discussed that with the COVID-19 pandemic, we are in the midst of an experiment as to how higher education will look going forward. Someone would have to be able to lead UW-Stevens Point beyond this difficult time. Regent Walsh inquired how we can identify someone that will be able to take charge in developing the campus. Brian advised that we should look for a leader that will incentivize experimentation in getting opportunities for students.

Search committee member Marc Young asked if the right candidate would need credentials in higher education, or should a candidate from the private sector be considered? Dave would be open to anyone from higher education or the private sector, but they would need to be able to lead and collaborate with various groups. Dr. Nisha Fernando suggested getting feedback from the faculty and staff about a potential private sector candidate. Regent Walsh agreed and added that a recently concluded successful search for a new chancellor for the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay featured applicants from non-traditional higher education backgrounds, so the candidates are out there and the system is doing a good job of finding them. Eric related the needs of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point to the University of Tennessee’s new president who did not come from a higher-education background and was quite successful, but acknowledged that finding a similar candidate that would fill the role of chancellor would be difficult. Kathy, a faculty member, stated that someone that is a disruptor would be a good candidate, but shouldn’t break things to see if they can be mended. Kathy also suggested that the strength of the university is experiential learning, and if that is what drives people to apply to the university, finding someone that can capitalize on these factors will increase scholarships and student enrollment.

Dr. Bowman thanked the group for their participation in this lively discussion.