

# WSU deans' deaths appear to be from natural causes

- **July 8th, 2009**
- (2) comments

By Joel Mills of the Tribune

**Erdman named new interim College of Education dean**



Phyllis Erdman...

Pullman Police Chief Ted Weatherly said on Tuesday the sudden, unexpected deaths of two Washington State University deans appear to be from natural causes.

"But we won't know for sure until forensic tests are completed," Weatherly said.

Results of those tests for College of Education Dean Judy Mitchell, who died June 26, are not expected for at least two weeks, he said.

Results for the man who replaced her on an interim basis and died a week later, Lenoar (Len) Foster, will likely be released sometime after that.

WSU named Phyllis Erdman as interim College of Education dean on Tuesday. Erdman has been the chair of the WSU Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling Psychology since 2003.

Mitchell, 70, was WSU's longest-serving dean, leading her college for the past 11 years. Foster, 57, took her place on June 29. He joined the College of Education faculty in 2003, and served as associate dean for three years.

Coming so close together, their deaths have shaken members of the college, professor Mike Trevisan said.

"There's a good deal of emotion," said Trevisan, who was named as Erdman's interim replacement on Tuesday. "There have been counselors in from the support units on campus, and they've mentioned there is no one right way (to grieve). Everybody's going to have a different process."

He said he's already seen a full range of emotions in meetings on Monday with Provost Warwick Bayly and Tuesday with President Elson Floyd. "It's pretty incredible," Trevisan said. "We'll work through it, and I think people are being supportive of one another and sure appreciate the support from the president and the provost."

On Tuesday, WSU also named Cori Mantle-Bromley as the College of Education's interim associate dean. Mantle-Bromley was chair of the Department of Teaching and Learning since 2005, and professor Darcy Miller was named as her interim replacement.

---

*Mills may be contacted at*