

Pitman, UI's only constant, will be missed

Lindsey Treffry/Moscow-Pullman Daily News Editorial Board

Bruce Pitman, the University of Idaho dean of students, is a selfless man, even in his impending retirement, which he announced Friday.

A Vandal of 40 years, Pitman has worked under 11 different presidents, including eight regular, three interim and one acting. He's been the university's one constant throughout the past four decades.

Not a pretentious bone in his body, it will be impossible to find a replacement to match his caliber.

Pitman has committed to remain in his seat while administrators search for his replacement. He says he's not going anywhere until the position is filled - which likely won't happen until early next fall, at the earliest - to ensure the department and university operate as usual and without hindrance. If only past presidents shared the same concern for the university after their hasty and untimely departures.

Pitman's open retirement is mirrored by his open door policy throughout the years. He has acted as a mediator between the public, media and the university. He has been the spokesman for the UI's sparkling moments and, more importantly, during its less than shining periods.

Following the death of Joseph Wiederrick, an 18-year-old student who died from hypothermia after a night of binge drinking, early last year, KTVB in Boise derided the university and its "culture of drinking" in a report. Pitman, suited up, was in his office and ready for camera crews. He helped lead a UI alcohol task force weeks later and braved the harsh claims the television station made against the UI.

Pitman also spoke on behalf of the university after the death of graduate student Katy Benoit, who was shot by faculty member Ernesto Bustamante. Pitman worked with the Benoit family to plan an on-campus memorial service for the slain 22-year-old.

Pitman has done more than just handle the UI's affairs. He has been a staple in the community, working with Family Promise, where he is president for the Palouse chapter, and First Presbyterian Church of Moscow, where he has delivered sermons as a lay preacher.

A suitable replacement may be found by the fall, but will anyone ever have as long of a tenure and leave as much of a mark as Pitman?

Pitman will be dearly missed at the UI, and maybe not fully appreciated until he's left the university for good.

Lucky for Moscow, he's sticking around - at least in the warmer months.

