

WSSU's PR chief Nancy Young retires

BY CHANEL DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE

Nancy Young stares into her past as she sits in her office in Blair Hall at Winston-Salem State University (WSSU). On Friday, May 29, she will no longer be able to do that there, for the space where she has worked with two chancellors, former Chancellor Donald Reaves and current Chancellor Elwood Robinson, and not only met co-workers who turned into friends and students who turned into children, will not be hers anymore.

She must release that space where moments in a day would turn into a lifetime of memories and where she said it's time to let go.

"My commitment, in my mind, was to stay as long as Donald Reaves stayed. When I had the opportunity to meet Elwood Robinson, I wanted to stay and help him get settled. I adore Donald and I adore Elwood. They are just two good people who have the best interest of the university at heart," she said. "I think it's a good time to leave, and I think things are in pretty good shape."

Young was named the director of public relations in April 2009 by Reaves but insists that she was never vying for the position.

"I didn't see it as a job interview. I had been talking to some of his folks about how I thought the whole marketing/communications area should be

structured. At the time, I had my own little consulting agency that worked with nonprofits, so I thought 'Maybe I'll get some contract work out of this.' He said, out of the blue, 'What would it take to get you to come to work here' and I told him as long as he gave me a little time to do things that I need for my mother and a little bit of flexibility. He said 'fine' and I said 'fine.' I didn't even ask what the pay was. It just felt right," she said.

The Belews Creek native has held several positions around the city in both the corporate and non-

profit sectors, even working for herself for awhile.

She has served as a media consultant for Second Harvest Food

Bank of Northwest North Carolina, the YWCA of Winston-Salem and The Advocacy for the Poor. She also worked as the corporate vice president for communications and community relations for Russell Corporation in Atlanta and Alexander City, Alabama.

The bulk of her experience comes from her tenure with Sara Lee Corporation/Branded Apparel (now Hanesbrand). There she held management positions in the Corporate Affairs and Community Relations area, making her responsible for the corporation's media and community relations programs, as well as public relations strategies, corporate contributions and communications.

Young credits her time at Sara Lee with tying her



Photo by Erin Mizelle for the Winston-Salem Chronicle

Nancy Young, director of public relations for Winston-Salem State University, will retire after six years at WSSU.

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—Nancy Young

in to the African-American community and all it had to offer. She said that it was there she met some key players in the community and WSSU. She said that she didn't know a lot about the school but instantly fell in love with it.

"I spent a lot of time in the African-American community, so I know a lot of people. I'm a known entity, which was very helpful, particularly when working with alumni. That's because of the acceptance and affection I was able to enjoy from the African-American community," she said.

Young said she has tried, for the past six years, to help others around her see what potential the school has and rid it of the stigma that can be associated with historically black

colleges and universities.

"We have some great professors, staff students, culture, athletics and a great band. It's a fun place to be, and I'm going to truly miss it," she said.

Randy Mills, vice chancellor for finance and administration, said that Young's absence will be felt around campus.

"Nancy Young is the consummate professional. She's represented us with skill, grace, and integrity when the stories were good, and sometimes when they weren't," Mills said. "She has WSSU red in her blood and always took great pride in her work and in this University. We will all miss her greatly."

While Young said that she will miss those she worked with including her staff, professors, deans and

reporters, it's the students that she'll miss the most.

"Every year I have the opportunity to get connected with certain groups, like the student newspaper and the student government officers. It's just a joy to have them around, to talk to them and hear their thoughts, sometimes giving advice when they ask and being there for them. I always shed a few tears at commencement because my babies are leaving. They're like my children."

She plans to spend the bulk of her retirement enjoying time with her mother, who is 99 1/2 years old and lives with her.

Young said she plans to take advantage of some things she didn't have time for while working at WSSU.

"I don't plan on miss-

ing any home football games. I hope to get to more basketball games than I have in the past, and some baseball games," she said. "I'll be here for Homecoming and Installation."

She also plans on championing a cause near and dear to her heart: the need for HBCUs.

"They serve a huge purpose, not only because of the environment it creates, but the opportunities it creates for our students to develop skills in addition to knowledge. I think it helps anyone who feels like they're a minority feel like they can be leaders reaching their full potential," she said.

It is not known yet who will replace Young.



Photo by Tammy Hardin

Dr. Freda C. Lewis-Hall was the keynote speaker at Salem College's graduation on Saturday, May 23.

Speaker

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medical research, in front-line patient care, and at global biopharmaceutical companies including Vertex, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Eli Lilly.

"We are preparing the next generation of scientific researchers and health-care professionals, and we have made it a priority in our capital campaign to provide state-of-the-art facilities for scientific study," says D.E. Lorraine Sterritt, president of Salem Academy and College. "We are thrilled to welcome such a prominent scientific researcher to campus at the very time when we are placing a strong emphasis on education and research in the sciences and in mathematics."

Embodying that quest, which others were beginning, Lewis-Hall praised Salem, since 1772 the oldest continuously operating women's college in the United States. She

told the 236 graduates — 125 of whom were traditional students — that they stood on the cusp of great scientific innovation and technology, and would hopefully be the last group to ever confront HIV/AIDS and cancer. A noted African-American doctor, she further applauded Salem's intentional inclusion of women of color and adult men and women into her student body, faculty, and staff.

Salem College conferred 206 undergrad and 30 master's degrees during Saturday's commencement: 162 Bachelor's of Arts, 35 Bachelors of Science, nine Bachelors of Science in Business Administration, 21 Masters of Arts in teaching, and nine Masters of Education degrees.

Already, this year's graduating class boasts a legacy of gifting over \$7,000 to the college, the highest of any graduating class.

Of graduates who shared their plans, four will begin advanced level programs this fall: Woyindoubara O. Miediaye Koripamo, Bayelsa, Nigeria, magna cum laude, will attend The London School of Economics in England;

Linda Kaye McDaniels, Winston-Salem, was accepted to Wake Forest University Divinity School; M. Denise Smith Leonard, Lewisville, cum laude, will continue studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro; and Paula Marie Booth, Emerald Isle, plans to attend Elon School of Law.

Carly Williams is a 2013 Salem College Communication/Creative Writing graduate.

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