

WSSU chancellor: 'I do not intend to resign...'

By T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

When Alvin Schexnider came to Winston-Salem State University, the thing that troubled people the most about him was his last name.

The chancellor's name was often butchered. People tripped up syllables or left them out completely.

Three years later, the name rolls off people's tongues with precision.

They've had practice using it. The name Schexnider has been whispered by school employees and alumni in break rooms and parking lots on WSSU's campus and shouted by the local media in headlines and sound bites.

These days seemingly everything about Schexnider troubles many of those with close ties to the school, from his ultra-regal demeanor to his hiring choices.

The financial gaffes the university has publicly endured on his watch have not helped.

But despite the growing wrath of his vocal critics, despite findings from a recent audit that WSSU's financial house has been as shaky as a mobile home and that the chancellor used public money for personal purposes, Schexnider says he has never thought about bowing out as chancellor.

Though for weeks now rumors of his departure have flourished, he says the talk of his leaving WSSU is a defective product of the city's rumor mill.

"I have not resigned; I do not intend to resign, so I don't know where this is coming from," Schexnider said during an interview last week. "I came here on a mission, to do a job. I care deeply about Winston-Salem State. I take my work very seriously (and) my work is not yet finished."

A spokesperson for UNC President Molly Broad said last week that she was also unaware of any such changes being made at WSSU.

Schexnider is obviously more

concerned about the school's future than its past. Though he talks openly about past mistakes by him and his administration, he is more animated and long-winded when speaking in the present tense.

He is concerned about public perceptions of the university. That's why, he says, he has always tried to answer the tough questions.

The picture Schexnider paints of WSSU is much brighter than

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Audit shows misuse of state funds

WSSU officials say bulk of irregularities already addressed

By T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

In March members of the Winston-Salem State University board of trustees publicly criticized the school's vice chancellor for finance and administration for shifting a quarter-million dollars from one school account to another without the board's consent.

In May Philip Gilley was sent to the school to help sort out its finances after Chancellor Alvin Schexnider appealed to UNC President Molly Broad for help.

And three weeks ago the vice chancellor for finance and administration resigned after having the bulk of her duties taken away from her and given to Gilley.

The annual audit of the university revealed what WSSU officials admitted months ago: The school has had its share of financial problems over the last 12 months.

The Office of the State Auditor released the audit last Friday. Its findings covered the period July 1997 through June 1998.

The audit pointed out myriad financial problems. Most stemmed from financial records that were either not properly kept or documented.

According to the audit, the school did not follow the proper procedures to ensure that its year-end financial statement package was accurately prepared.

WSSU filed its financial package on time with the Office of the State Controller, according to the audit, but school officials had to make additional entries to the package after the deadline date.

Failure to submit the entire package jeopardizes the timely completion and issuance of the state's annual financial report, according to the audit.

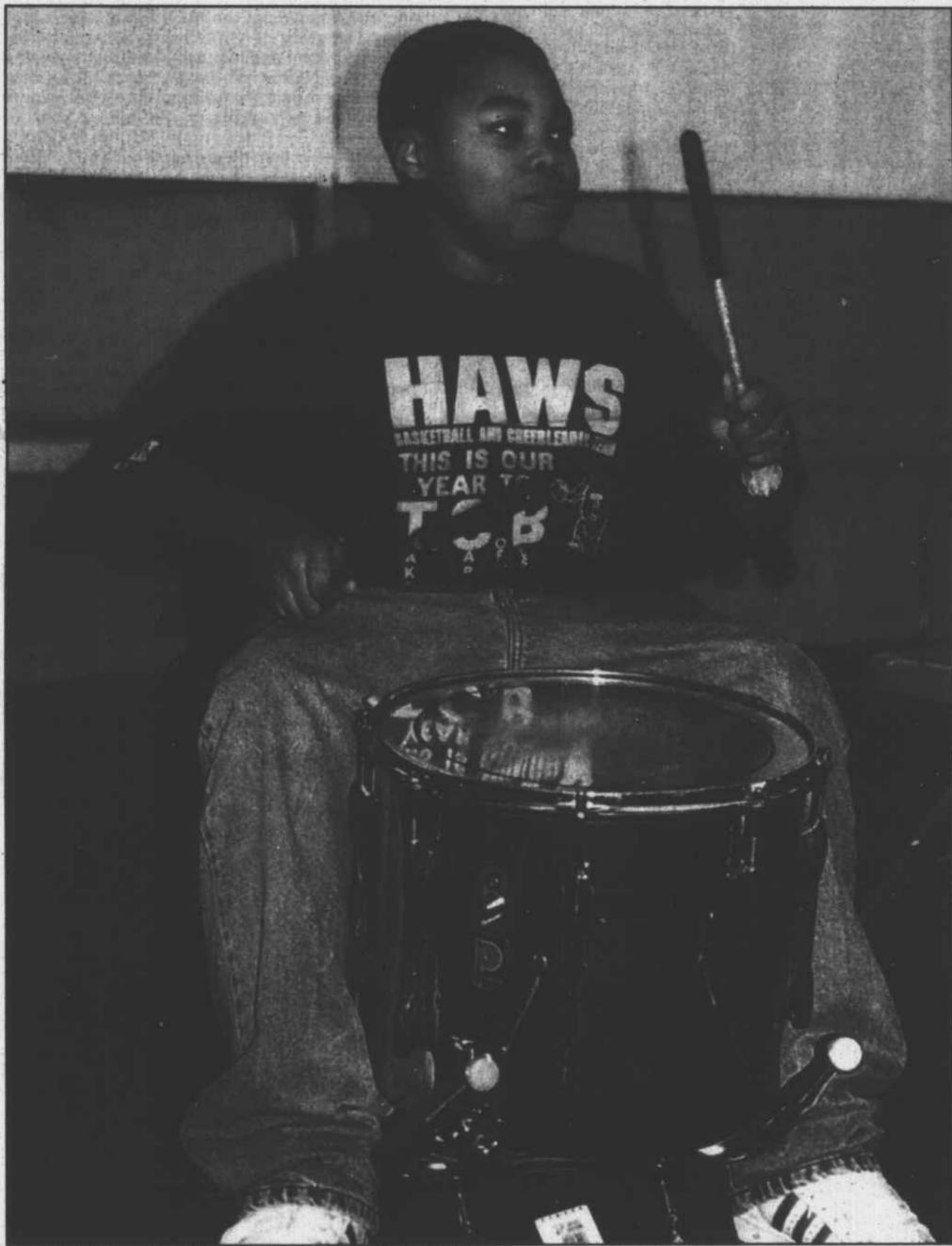
"The university has taken necessary steps to ensure that all financial reporting will be timely and accurate," said Gilley, the school's acting chief financial officer, in a statement. "Additionally, in the future a more extensive review of all reports will be conducted by management at all levels."

Gilley, an employee of the Office of the State Auditor, was sent to WSSU by Broad to help clean the university's financial house. He took over the duties of Clementine Cone, who resigned earlier this month as vice chancellor for finance and administration.

Cone was criticized earlier this year for shifting funds from the university's endow-

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Sign of the season



Isiaha Taylor, a member of the YWCA's Marching 100s, pounds his drum during a recent rehearsal at the Empowering Family Center. Taylor is an eighth-grader at Jefferson Middle School.

Photo by Jeri Young

LIFT gets 90 days to get finances in order

By PAUL COLLINS
THE CHRONICLE

The State Charter School Advisory Committee voted overwhelmingly on Friday to give LIFT Academy, a public charter school in East Winston, 90 days to straighten its books and reduce its deficit.

If the school does not comply, it could lose its state charter, which would mean the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars in government monies.

Last month the Charter School Advisory Committee recommended that the State Board of Education revoke LIFT Academy's charter, and on Aug. 5 the state board voted to begin the process to revoke the school's charter. The school appealed, which set up Friday's meeting before the Charter School Advisory Committee.

Dozens of students, parents, faculty members and school administrators attended the meeting in Raleigh on behalf of the school, said state Sen. Ham Horton of Winston-Salem, who spoke to the committee on behalf of LIFT Academy.

Horton told the committee that LIFT Academy has been serving students given up on by the public school system since 1982. (LIFT Academy was a private school until it became a public charter school in the 1997-98 school year.) He said that LIFT Academy has had some difficulties in its transition to becoming a charter school, but those difficulties can be overcome.

State officials have said that LIFT Academy used \$33,861 in state or local tax money to pay a federal tax bill to the Internal Revenue Service for unpaid payroll taxes for a period before LIFT became a state public charter school. But, according to Horton, Earlene Parmon, administrator at LIFT Academy, has personally raised \$27,000 in private monies to help repay the state money that was used to pay the federal taxes.

Paul LeSieur, assistant director of the State Department of Public Instruction's division of school business, said state officials last week received school records about the \$27,000 and have not had time to verify the amount. He said the school will have to replace the full \$33,861 with private money.

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Chronicle to celebrate 25th anniversary

Sybil, Debra Terry to headline festival in park

By JERI YOUNG
THE CHRONICLE

Recording artist Sybil and comedian/actress Debra Terry will headline an all-star lineup for The Chronicle's 25th Anniversary/Family Day Celebration Saturday at Rupert Bell Park.

The duo will team up to host the event, which will also include performances by a host of local groups, including the Mass Choir of Mount Olive Baptist Church, The Boss Drummers of the Winston-Lake YMCA, members of the Artistic Studio for the Performing Arts and saxophonist Tony Chambers.

The all-female group Ebonique will also perform.

The emphasis on local talent isn't accidental, says Fannie Henderson, the event's coordinator.

"We thought the local people would be an added attraction we would

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Real life



Artist Ann Bonner says her works allow her to share the joys and sorrows of women. For full story see page A4.

Johnson: Hire firm to run inner-city elementary school

By T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Vic Johnson might be trying to sell a lemon.

A lemon that a majority of his fellow School Board members said a collective "no thanks" to late last year.

But he is repackaging it, making it more appealing to those who will benefit most from it.

"I'm not saying it's the panacea, but I believe that we should try something differ-



Johnson

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