

Goldie Smith Byrd, Ph.D.

Biography

A Magnolia, North Carolina native, Dr. Goldie S. Byrd is the founder of the Center for Outreach in Alzheimer's, Aging and Community Health (COAACH) at North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University (NCAT). Dr. Byrd never envisioned that she'd have such a passion for studying Alzheimer's Disease. In fact, she originally wanted to become a high school principal going into college. This desire of hers changed, however, when she was given the opportunity to conduct research in undergraduate and graduate school.

Dr. Byrd attended NCAT for her undergraduate studies, where she earned not one but two bachelor's degrees. She went on to Meharry Medical College to earn her Ph.D. in microbiology after she was encouraged to do so by her mentors. Dr. Byrd became a professor of biology at NCAT in 2003. She eventually became the university's first female chair of the Department of Biology, as well as the first permanent female dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

During her time as the Dean of College of Arts and Sciences at NCAT, Dr. Byrd made the decision to found COAACH. She conducted extensive, in-depth research on Alzheimer's Disease for many years prior to founding COAACH (research publications). Dr. Byrd's research is published in esteemed, peer-reviewed journals and has been recognized by the Alzheimer's Association. This research was the driving force behind her desire to create an organization aimed at providing education and awareness about Alzheimer's Disease, resources for patients and caregivers, and research opportunities to continue studying the disease.

Dr. Byrd was particular about COAACH catering to the African American community because African Americans have an increased risk of being diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. Additionally, Dr. Byrd was mindful of the fact that African Americans typically have less access to factual information about Alzheimer's, lower perceived risk of the disease, lower literacy skills, and a misperception that Alzheimer's is normal memory loss. Furthermore, Dr. Byrd found that African Americans tend to be more confident in future advances in Alzheimer's research.

In her time as COAACH's executive director, Dr. Byrd's leadership was both effective and beneficial. She led COAACH to receive more than five million in grants and corporate gifts from the National Institute of Health and National Science Foundation. Dr. Byrd also established a sense of trust and connection between COAACH and African American communities in the state of North Carolina. Dr. Byrd built symbiotic relationships between COAACH and its surrounding African American communities through successful outreach programs and her display of transparency in research studies.

Dr. Byrd stepped down from her position as COAACH's executive director in 2019, but still stands as COAACH's honorable founder. Her devotion to serving the African American community within the Alzheimer's sphere is unmatched and renowned. Dr. Byrd now works as the director of the Maya Angelou Center for Health Equity, which is located at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center.

Dr Goldie S Byrd is Professor of Public Health Sciences and Director of the Maya Angelou Center for Health Equity at Wake Forest School of Medicine. She is the former Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Chair of Biology, and the Nathan F Simms Endowed Distinguished Professor of Biology at North Carolina A&T State University. While serving as dean, Dr Byrd founded the Center for Outreach in Alzheimer's Aging and Community Health (COAACH) to complement her genetics of Alzheimer's in African Americans research. COAACH is a cross-disciplinary community engaged center funded by the university and corporate partnerships.

Dr. Byrd conducts research on the Genetics of Alzheimer's disease in African Americans, to understand genetic variants that might attribute to the increased burden of AD in this population. Her genetics and community engagement research are widely published and has potential to lead to therapeutics for AD. Her research is complemented by her passion for inclusion and increasing representation of underrepresented groups in research and clinical trials.

Dr Byrd has received numerous awards for her leadership, research and service, including the Leadership-North Carolina Stanley Frank Leadership Award, the

Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM) which was received at a White House ceremony, and most recently she was recognized by Governor Roy Cooper as a Health Equity Champion for the State.

Dr Byrd has served on panels, ad hoc groups and advisory boards for the National Academy of Science, the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the Alzheimer's Association, the North Carolina Biotechnology Center and the Executive Committee for the North Carolina Institute of Medicine. Appointed by the NC Secretary of Health and Human Services, she recently co-chaired the state's COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Committee.