

## NC Central Chancellor Debra Saunders-White, 59, Dies After Battle With Cancer

By Administrator

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Debra Saunders-White, the first permanent female leader of North Carolina Central University, has died Saturday after kidney cancer. Chancellor Saunders-White She was diagnosed with kidney cancer in 2015 and took a medical leave of absence from the university on Aug. 8. She came to the Historically Black College and University on June 1, 2013 after serving the President Barack Obama's Education Department. She previously worked at Hampton University and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. She also worked in corporate marketing for IBM. A former math teacher, Saunders-White used to refer to her catchphrase, "Eagle Excellence" as "E-squared." Saunders-White is credited with bringing a can-do spirit to the campus under the mantra of "Eagle Excellence" or "E-squared", a reference to her days as a former math teacher.

Gov. Pat McCrory

praised Saunders-White's commitment to  
NCCU

, education and Durham. "Her tenure at NC Central was marked by accomplishment and growth and her leadership, especially in helping us to make critical investments in NC Central, will be missed,"

University of North Carolina System President Margaret Spellings said Saunders-White would be remembered for her dedication.

"Deb loved  
NCCU

with all her being and treated each of its students as her very own. She called them her light and her inspiration as she waged her battle with cancer. As a first-generation college graduate, she understood the rare opportunities that higher education can provide, as well as the challenges so many young people face in accessing and affording college."

She had been quiet about her illness, but last year, before leading the  
NCCU

community on a breast cancer walk, she disclosed her cancer diagnosis, joking, "But I look great, right?"

Chairman of the  
NCCU

Board of Trustees, George Hamilton, said Saunders-White's death was a deep loss for him personally, and for  
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“She led  
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through transformational years where the university recorded significant increases in critical performance indicator areas, including retention and graduation rates, and the positioning of our two research institutes became more prominent,” Hamilton said.

Saunders-White is survived by two children, Elizabeth Paige and Cecil III, her mother, Irene Saunders, and her brothers, Roger, Ralph and Kyle Saunders, and their families, a number of other family members and a host of friends.

A vigil is scheduled for Monday, November 28, at 5 p.m. in B.N. Duke Auditorium. A candlelight ceremony will be held immediately following in Hoey Administration Circle.