



**PRESIDENT'S CHARGE TO THE
FORREST HALL TASK FORCE
Student Union Building
Thursday, Nov. 12, 2015**

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(PRESIDENT MCPHEE)

Thank you, Dr. Frisby, and good afternoon!

I deeply appreciate the commitment each of you has made to serve as members of this task force.

You may recall that the university recently announced that it would engage the community on the name of the campus building that houses MTSU's Army Reserve Officer Training Corps program and is named after Confederate Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest.

The decision to engage in this discussion came following a mass shooting at a historically black South Carolina church that prompted a national discussion about Confederate visual images and symbols on public property.

Similar discussions about specific memorials or commemorations are also taking place in other institutions and locations in the state of Tennessee.

I offer my thanks to Dr. Frisby, your chairman, who has approached his leadership role from positions of a historian, an academic and, most important, a Tennessean who graduated from our university.

Dr. Frisby's research has examined the Civil War and how cultures memorialize military conflict.

He has authored numerous articles and essays that deal with Tennessee's Civil War occupation.

His academic research has focused on conflict and culture and how societies remember and memorialize warfare.

Given his expert knowledge and commitment to an open, inclusive process, I am confident that Dr. Frisby will conduct the panel in a manner that will be inclusive of all viewpoints and perspectives.

As I look around this table today, I am pleased to see

a broad range of stakeholders willing to engage in this discussion.

My goal for this group was to have representation from our student, faculty and alumni, as well as community representatives.

I am confident that such a broad range of perspectives will produce a thoughtful recommendation for my consideration.

I am asking this panel to recommend to me no later than April 2016 one of the following options:

- Whether Forrest Hall should be renamed;
- Whether it should retain the name but with added historical perspective;
- Or whether to keep the name as is.

It is important to note that the Tennessee Board of Regents would have to approve any recommended name change.

We are also **engaging our colleagues in state government** to determine whether other entities would have to give approval as well.

I am asking Dr. Frisby to lead a thoughtful, inclusive and thorough examination of this issue.

I ask that you keep in mind what course of action would best align with **the university's top priority of recruiting, retaining and graduating students** – and preparing our graduates for service, scholarship and leadership in our state and around the world.

I also ask that you be mindful of the purpose of the Forrest Hall building itself, which is to house and support **one of the nation's top programs for the**

training and preparation of future officers of the U.S. Army.

However, and let me be clear, I am looking for this task force to make a **specific recommendation**, not just only an exploration of different potential options.

It is my hope that **your recommendation will help guide me** in whatever option that the university elects to pursue in this matter.

Finally, **I have asked that the meetings of this task force remain open to the public and that every effort be made to share the information, deliberations and**

processes that you employ in making your recommendation.

I asked for the creation of a webpage so that our communities can follow your work.

And I ask that this task force determine **how best to engage with those who wish to make their voices heard on this matter.**

I urge you to do this **in a manner that is efficient, productive and inclusive,** so that the task force can get the perspectives necessary in reaching a recommendation.

I will make the necessary resources available to this task force to achieve your goals.

Again, I commend each of you for your willingness to serve our university.

You have our deepest appreciation and thanks.