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**TASK FORCE'S RECOMMENDATION ON FORREST HALL'S NAME GOES  
TO TENNESSEE BOARD OF REGENTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

*MTSU president accepts consensus opinion to rename military science building*

**MURFREESBORO** – MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee on Thursday accepted the recommendation by the Forrest Hall Task Force to change the name of the building that houses the university's Army Reserve Officers Training Corps program.

McPhee, in a letter to Derek Frisby, chair of the task force and a global studies instructor, said "the values and goals we share in 2016 as a comprehensive university with international reach are not best reflected by retaining a name affixed in 1958 when we were a small local college that rarely extended beyond our region."

"It is clear that there are many wide-ranging and contradicting views about the life and legacy of Confederate Lt. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest," McPhee said. "I do not feel it is my role to discern the appropriateness or relevance of his actions prior, during or after the Civil War.

"It is appropriate, however, for me to assess whether the decision made in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to name the building for General Forrest remains in our best interest in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."

The president also said he has asked MTSU Professor Carroll Van West, who serves as Tennessee's state historian, to develop a historical timeline, with primary source set, that "encapsulates the life, legacy and impact that General Forrest had upon our state, region and nation." It would be housed in the Albert Gore Research Center.

McPhee noted he felt "the best place for commemorating heritage is on the hallowed ground where it occurred, and that is what MTSU has done." He added the university's Center for Historic Preservation, under Van West's direction, has helped install more than 400 interpretive Civil War markers throughout Tennessee.

The 17-member task force on April 19 announced its consensus, with duly noted objections by some members, that the structure dedicated to Forrest be renamed. The task force held three public forums and two open deliberations in making its recommendation.

The task force's recommendation will go next to the Tennessee Board of Regents, MTSU's governing body, for consideration. Regents could decide as soon as their June meeting whether to forward it to the Tennessee Historical Commission for action.

Forrest Hall is the only MTSU building named for an individual without any ties to the university. Current university and TBR policy reserves such commemorations for a student, alumni, faculty member, administrator, public official tied to governance, or a donor whose generosity furthered the goals of the University.

Forrest Hall was built in 1954 to house the ROTC program, but was not dedicated until 1958, when the name became official. Forrest, who died in 1877, had no connection to the university's founding as Middle Tennessee Normal School in 1911.

In 1958, McPhee said, the university was still Middle Tennessee State College, had an enrollment of just 2,539 students. "We were decades away from the far-reaching and inclusive opportunities that would become our hallmark," he said, adding the university frequently used Forrest's image in its activities during that period.

However, as MTSU "grew in size and stature, so did our sensitivity of the controversial connotation that our use of General Forrest and other Confederate symbols had upon our goal to mature into an institution with broader reach and scope," McPhee said.

Today, McPhee said, MTSU "is the largest in the Tennessee Board of Regents system with an enrollment of almost 23,000 students. We recruit students and faculty from across the nation and world and many of our academic programs and industry partnerships attract global attention. We have 39 international partnerships in 18 countries.

"We must acknowledge our past but we must remain focused on our future."

The President, however, said MTSU "understands history should never be erased," and he underscored the university's long-time support of "research, programs and projects that tell the stories of how the Civil War transformed Tennessee.

"In Murfreesboro, the university has assisted in developing displays that stand at the Rutherford County Courthouse and Oaklands Mansion, informing residents and visitors of General Forrest's actions," he said.

"We remain committed to supporting fully these, and many other, important efforts on behalf of Tennessee's Civil War past."

McPhee, in reflecting upon the public forums, also said he was "disappointed by the lack of civility" and "that certain moments were unruly and disrespectful. This does not represent who we are as a university.

"But I also know that our freedom allows for such discourse. Free speech covers views that you find disagreeable as much as it does for those views you embrace."

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Attachment:

- PDF of President Sidney A. McPhee's letter to Derek Frisby, chair of the Forrest Hall Task Force