

Hello Altamont community!

For transparency and accountability, here is the email shared with Chris Durst by a group of concerned alumni. This email includes the document with signatures, as well as an implementation plan for Altamont to proceed with addressing the concerns voiced in the document. You can access our original letter here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ayYaBVaurgemLC-bpDzeTcbD6cKFAMT7T7YhiTMWuPM/edit?usp=sharing>

Dear Mr. Durst and the entirety of the Altamont School administration,  
We are writing to formally share with you a letter written by a group of concerned alumni and signed by 208 members of the Altamont community. We are appreciative of the efforts of communication by you and the Altamont administration in creating the space of a town hall for concerns to be voiced. However, our letter is an attempt to share concerns that should be heard, and acted upon with immediacy. **We ask that our letter, and the demands therein, be addressed formally, wholly, and publicly, before the town hall.**

The space of a town hall, and the framing as a space “to listen and to learn”, is a valuable step for our community in addressing the urgent and serious concerns that we (and many students before us) have raised. As we have hoped to convey, racism at Altamont has gone unaddressed for far too long. What we are asking for does not begin or end solely with dialogue, it must involve action at every step. We have taken the liberty of parsing out some of our demands into various phases based on urgency and feasibility. We believe whole-heartedly that every single demand we have listed is fully possible for Altamont to actualize-- what is needed is the commitment and will to do so. We will be sharing this email publicly on the Alumni Facebook Page for transparency and accountability.

#### **PHASE 1: To be completed by the August 5th Town Hall**

- We ask that Altamont **release an updated statement in regard to the recent instances of police brutality** that directly acknowledges and states what Altamont stands for and what it stands against. The previous statements do not acknowledge or address racism or police brutality, nor do they adequately express solidarity or a commitment to justice.
- We ask that you **review our demands in full**, and be able to **provide a concrete update** as to the intended first steps and the anticipated timeline for each demand. We understand that this timeline may be protracted, especially for considerations such as faculty hiring and curricular changes. This review of our demands is the first step towards an open conversation about how Altamont and our community can move forwards.
- We ask for a **greater understanding of the format of the upcoming town hall**. We seek to understand how we can best engage and represent the demands that we have already created and shared. We ask for the agenda, structure, and framing of the town hall. This information should be shared broadly with our community for transparency.
- We ask for a **schedule of future town halls** to be shared with our community including parents and current students. These town halls have the potential to be a crucial space of voice and change. We ask for a continued commitment to creating this dialogue.
- We ask that the **Student and Family Handbook be immediately revised to clearly include the school’s zero-tolerance policy** for offenses caused by students, parents, faculty/staff, alumni, and board members **relating to racial discrimination and harassment**.

#### **Phase 2: Immediate Concerns: To be completed no later than one (1) month after the August 5th Town Hall**

- **We ask for a comprehensive list of updates with regards to our demands and their actualization be shared with the Altamont community.** This should build upon the initial review of our demands and should further detail Altamont's plans and timeline. Each demand that we have written should be considered and addressed in this update. We understand that some concerns will take longer to address. We ask for a commitment to the demands of the letter and for continued transparency to the Altamont community. It is our hope that, as Altamont plans for reopening, these changes can be directly implemented.
- **We ask Altamont to convene a review panel for Altamont's core values by this time.**
- **We ask Altamont to convene a review panel for the C. Kyser Miree Center's standards by this time.**
- We ask for an update on how **the current archival project** that Altamont is engaged in will include **analyses of Altamont's historical position within Birmingham with regards to racial justice and injustice.**
- We ask that Altamont plan to take students to the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute or another Civil Rights site/museum at least once every academic year, and that our community is informed by this time that this is **formally and concretely woven into the structure of an Altamont education and planned as a certainty each year.**
- **We ask for the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion office by this time.** This would strengthen the commitment to diversity across the school and support the implementation of many of these demands.
- We ask for a **concrete update on how Altamont will ensure that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) are firmly presented as valuable educational prospects to students.**
- We ask for detailed information on a **specific and formal process for students and parents to report racist incidents** perpetrated by peers (including parents and students) and faculty.
- We ask that summaries and minutes of **all future Board of Trustees meetings be shared with the Altamont community.** We call for greater transparency, especially with regards to key decisions.
- We ask that the title of "Headmaster" be removed from Altamont **immediately**, even if informally.

### **Phase 3: Development and Implementation (updates every 2 months)**

- **For our remaining unmet demands within the section on Classrooms/Curriculum, we ask that the community is provided updates every two (2) months.** These updates should include information about the timeline and structure of the changes happening at Altamont, and specifically how these changes address the concerns voiced in our letter.
  - We believe that curricular changes, faculty trainings, developing guidelines for faculty, project week trips, and the development of seminar courses, will take time, revision, and conversation. We are looking forward to the spaces where these conversations will happen, and we are hopeful for what Altamont can build and commit to as a community.
- **For our remaining unmet demand within the section on Institutional Structure, we ask that the community is provided with updates every two (2) months.** We ask that Altamont create a specific plan for the following:
  - Recruitment and hiring of more faculty of color
  - Recruitment of students with diverse racial, socioeconomic, and academic backgrounds
  - Faculty and staff training (and students, especially those in key leadership positions) in bystander intervention related to racist incidents

- Development and administration of anonymous climate surveys and details on how the results/analysis will be shared with all students, parents, and alumni
- Requirement that the Board of Trustees include a larger number of non-white members, and transparency on the Board of Trustees appointment process and how identity will be considered and prioritized within that process.
- We ask that one Board meeting per year is open to Students and Alumni. We expect an update on the schedule for this meeting, as well as the structure and format to ensure it provides ample space for community voice.
- Require that the Altamont Alumni Association officers include a larger number of non-white members, particularly Black alumni, to better represent the interests of marginalized students and alumni.
- **For our remaining unmet demands within the section on Current Events and Institutional Values, we ask that our community is provided updates every two (2) months.** We ask that Altamont create a specific plan for the following:
  - Provide direct funding and support to BSU and other identity/cultural groups.
  - We ask for greater intentionality in planning the events of Black History Month and details regarding the Black History Month organizing committee
    - Our concerns regarding Black History Month should be addressed **no later than Black History Month 2021**
  - We ask that Altamont convey and articulate its commitment to racial justice with the same strength and consistency that it does the honor code.

#### **Phase 4: Sustainability and Continuity- to begin no later than 1 year after the August 5th 2020 Town Hall**

We hope and believe that Altamont can make powerful steps within a year. We believe in the shared values of our community, and, as stated in your recent email, our “role in improving the fabric of society”. We must do this work internally within ourselves, and as a community. Within a year, we believe Altamont can strengthen and actualize its commitment to diversity, justice, and equity. However, we also must acknowledge that the work does not end here. At this point in time, we have created this list of concerns that must be addressed. We also must acknowledge that in a few years, we as a community may be facing new concerns, ones that we have not anticipated at this moment. With this in mind, we ask that Altamont provide a **comprehensive, detailed, and holistic plan** extending into future years. The commitment to diversity, justice, and equity cannot be bound into a single person’s influence or time working at Altamont. It must extend beyond all of us. We hope that many of our demands-- especially the call to create a Diversity and Inclusion office and the calls to revise the school curriculum-- will lead to far greater changes and will open up space for future advocacy. This plan should include all aspects of educational and social life at Altamont, it should firmly address diversity, identity, power, and privilege, and it should articulate clearly how Altamont will continue to seek out change and growth with regard to the support provided to students and the educational environment.

We look forward to hearing your response.