

THE ALTAMONT SCHOOL

THE
ALTAMONT
SCHOOL
TRUTH KNOWLEDGE HONOR
1975

SUMMER 2021

Interim Head of School

Tom Bendel

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THE MISSION OF THE ALTAMONT SCHOOL is to improve the fabric of society by graduating compassionate, well-educated individuals capable of independent thinking and innovative ideas. To this end, the school attracts, nurtures, and challenges students whose commitment to truth, knowledge, and honor will prepare them not only for the most rigorous college programs, but also for productive lives.



This spring, Camp McDowell hosted a hands-on science program for our 5th-6th graders. Topics included Plant it Earth, Forest Connections, Farm Fauna, Radical Raptors, Art in Nature, Geology, Survival Skills and Team Building.

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4801 Altamont Road South
Birmingham, AL 35222
www.altamontschool.org
205-879-2006

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The Altamont School admits students of any race, disability, color, creed, national, or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, disability, color, creed, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions practices, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Altamont's girls track and field team won the 2021 AHSAA Class 2A Track & Field State Championship. The boys team won state runner up. See story on page 31.



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The Altamont School magazine was printed using environmentally safe UV ink and varnish and recycled paper.

From The Board President



Dear Altamont Community,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well, and for those of you with students, I hope that you are enjoying a well-deserved summer break. The past year and a half have been immensely challenging for Altamont, our community, the nation and the entire world. While those challenges are not yet finished, I write to you with renewed optimism for our shared future.

I thank our faculty and staff for their incredible dedication to our students throughout the pandemic. This time has been difficult for us all, but our faculty and staff have put in countless extra hours to ensure that Altamont has continued to meet and surpass the high expectations that we all have for the school. I also want to thank Chris Durst for his leadership during his tenure.

As you know, the top priority of the Board of Trustees is to hire an interim and ultimately a permanent head of school. Bryson Stephens (Class of 1990 and current parent) chairs our search committee and inspires me every day with his considered and purposeful leadership. We are excited to announce Mr. Tom Bendel as our new interim head of school. Continue to follow our progress for a permanent head of school at www.altamontschool.org/about/search.

I also want to highlight the strategic planning work done by the Board and the Clarus Consulting Group over the past year, which will culminate in the release of our plan later this summer.

Hundreds of members of the Altamont community participated in our process, whether through our survey, focus groups or individual interviews, and the Board has been both informed and energized by this engagement. Stay tuned for more communications about our plan prior to the start of the 2021-22 academic year.

This is an exciting time in the life of the school. With encouraging news about vaccine efficacy and a continued decline in the pandemic locally and nationally, we are planning for a full return to the gold and white schedule this fall. As we move into the future with a new head of school and a strategic plan, we have a unique opportunity to refocus on what has made Altamont the wonderful place that it is—our commitment to truth, knowledge and honor, and our conviction that our students can and will improve the fabric of society through their compassion, their innovation and their ideas.

Thank you for joining us in this work.

Chris Nicholson '99
President, Board of Trustees



Tom Bendel

Interim Head of School for 2021-22 School Year

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Search Committee, it is with great pleasure that we introduce our new interim head of school, Tom Bendel.

Mr. Bendel brings a great depth and breadth of experience, from university and secondary school classroom instruction to independent school headship. Mr. Bendel and his wife, Jennifer, are coming to us from Richmond, Virginia, where he most recently served as head of school at Sabot at Stony Point. Prior to that position, he was head of school at North Jakarta Intercultural School, head of upper school at Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School and dean of student affairs at The American School in Switzerland.

Before becoming a professional educator, he served 20 years as an officer in the United States Navy, where his primary duty was as a naval flight officer. Mr. Bendel is a graduate of Georgetown University, the Naval Postgraduate School and Virginia Tech.

During his time visiting Altamont, Mr. Bendel was impressed by the enthusiasm of everyone he met. “Their evident joy at being part of this school is infectious, and it makes me want to be part of it too,” he said. “Altamont is a great school, with a great history, and I am thrilled to have a chance to contribute to its great future.”

“What excites me the most about Mr. Bendel is the combination of energy and enthusiasm he brings to the position balanced by a depth of experience and wisdom from a career in education,” said Bryson Stephens, chair of the Search Committee.

Mr. Bendel has been married to his wife for 36 years. They have two adult children, Christopher and Todd, two grandchildren (Calista, age 5, and Nicholas, age 2) and are expecting a third grandchild this summer. They are also the proud parents of two dogs, Molly and Floyd. Mr. Bendel is a runner and a cyclist, and plays the saxophone and guitar.

The Bendels have led a life that has taken them to many different parts of the country and the world and are excited about the prospect of getting to know Birmingham. Please join us in welcoming and supporting the Bendels as they connect with the Altamont and Birmingham communities in the weeks and months ahead.

AN UNPRECEDENTED YEAR

THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR WAS UNLIKE ANY OTHER. THE BEST WAY TO REMEMBER THIS YEAR IS TO RECOUNT MANY OF THE POSITIVE STORIES AND OUTCOMES.

Reworking Physical Spaces

Due to the renovations of key spaces, Altamont was well prepared to social distance. The Knights Den, Senior Commons and Orange Bowl accommodated bigger classes, allowing students the ability to spread out. Also, the Livingston Gallery was retrofitted with doors, making it an ideal environment for larger classes. Staggered classes, carpool times and lunch times reduced traffic flow in the one-way hallways, stairwells and common areas. Also, bipolar ionization units were installed in all classrooms.

Improved Technology

As a Microsoft 1-to-1 laptop school, we successfully moved to distance learning in March 2020. Over the summer, faculty and staff worked hard to make distance learning a great experience. Through rewriting curriculum, installing equipment in classrooms, coming up with innovative projects and learning the capabilities of Microsoft Teams, our faculty exceeded all expectations with this year's curriculum delivery.

Traditions Continued

Altamont traditions still continued even through COVID. Camp McDowell Environmental Camp came to campus this spring for our 5th-6th graders. Roundtable, Graduation, Roast Pig, Senior Breakfast, May Day and 8th Grade Commencement also happened. Additionally, our athletic teams played traditional seasons, even winning a state championship.

THANK YOU, ALTAMONT COMMUNITY! From monitoring temperatures and symptoms at home to wearing masks with a good attitude, thank you for everything you did to make this in-person school year possible.



THANK YOU

Our Medical Advisory Committee helped us navigate this year, and we are grateful for their expertise and time.

Mirjam-Colette Kempf, Ph.D., M.P.H., professor of nursing, health behavior, infectious diseases and epidemiology at UAB (parent of alums)

Liesel French, M.D., pediatrician (current parent)

Anne Brisendine, Dr.P.H., assistant professor of public health (2005 alum)

Turner Overton, M.D., associate professor, division of infectious diseases at UAB (current parent)

Liz Edwards, past president, Board of Trustees (parent of alums)

Student Spotlight: Jenna Flowers

Rising 7th grader Jenna Flowers shared her sewing talent by selling Christmas face masks to the Altamont community as a fundraiser. All the proceeds went to Restoration Academy, a K-12 school in Fairfield, Alabama. Jenna made over 40 masks during Thanksgiving break, and she donated over \$200 to Restoration Academy.



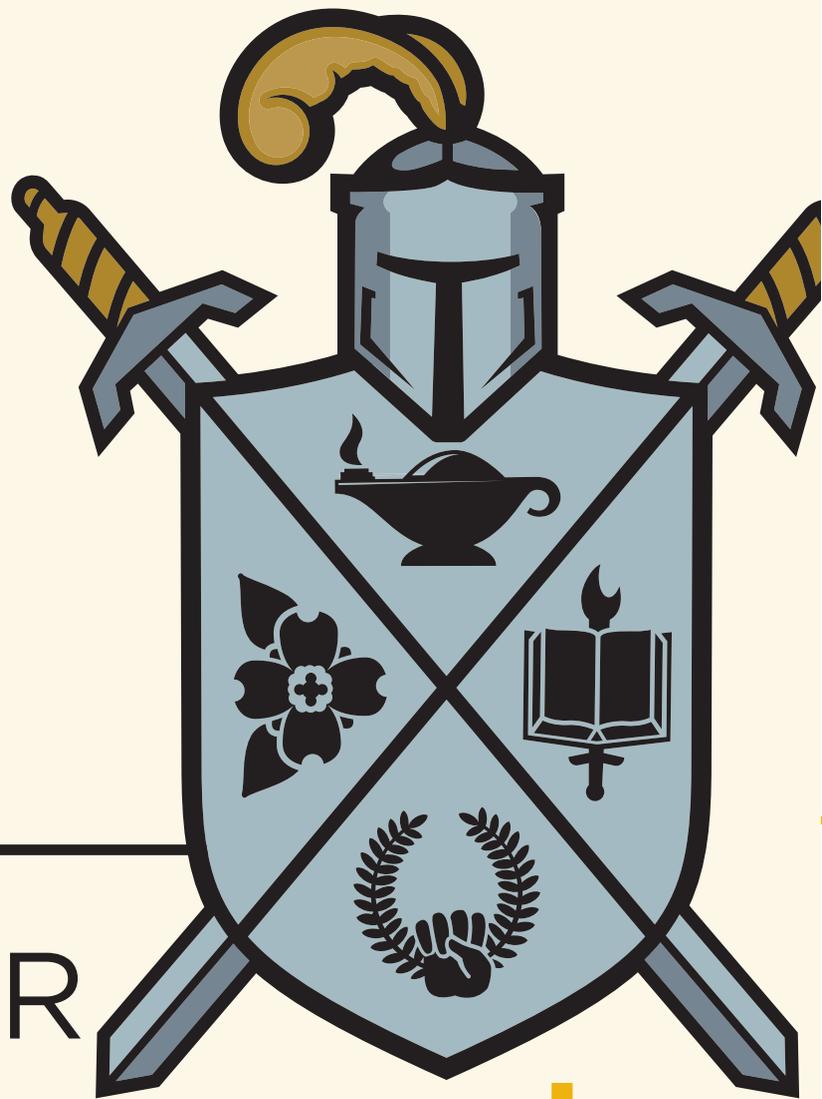
While we were unable to host our gala this year, we thank the following for their generous financial support.



Lisa & Steve Alexander
Paige & John Daniel
Liz & William Edwards
Caroline & Jay Ezelle
Sawsan & Lucas Gambino
Lori & Matt Lyons

Colin & Guy Mitchell
Dottie Mitchell
Marisa & Jeb Mitchell
Chelsea & Chris Nicholson
Andrea & Jimmy Oliver
Dottie & Steve Pak

Anne & Ned Rand
Kathleen & David Roth
Emily Schultz & David Perry
Meredith & Mitesh Shah
Virginia & Tim Stone
Mallie & Jay Whatley



LIFE AFTER Altamont

At Altamont, we have a robust and active network of over 3,000 alumni. These alums are making a global difference in areas from health care to technology to the arts. Connecting current students and alumni is an important aspect of the Altamont community. We asked four students to have a conversation with an alum engaged in careers of interest to them. Here are their stories.



LAURYN HILL

Class of 2015

Lauryn Hill is an associate photo editor at *Wired* magazine. Her work at the magazine includes commissioning photographers to create images and portraits of story subjects, web research, and assigning artwork to the security, science and culture section of the *Wired* website.

Tell me about yourself.

I started Altamont in 7th grade and went to George Washington University.

How did your experience at Altamont shape your career path and ambitions?

Most of my life at Altamont really did revolve around photography. I wanted to curate my entire experience around eventually working at a magazine. So that involved trying to be editor-in-chief of the yearbook and taking portraits of my classmates. I wanted to take editorial shots—how they might be seen in *Vogue* magazine. That experience really put me on a path to figure out who I wanted to be.

People are often discouraged from careers in creative fields. Have you experienced this?

I wanted to go to an art school to focus on photography because one of my first electives at Altamont was photography with Mrs. Hunter. I majored in journalism because I still wanted to be in proximity to photography, and I knew that avenue could still lead me down that road. But because of my family, creative fields weren't really on their radar. They've always wanted me to go the medical or engineering route.

But I felt like choosing journalism as a major was a happy medium between being practical and pursuing my dreams.

Any final thoughts?

Please don't let anyone discourage you from pursuing a career in photography. Before I started, I was told that photography was oversaturated. But honestly, it's not. As a photo editor, I sometimes have problems finding a particular photographer in a particular location in the United States with a particular style we want. So, I think more people should pursue photography or a creative career in any medium.



Interview by Simms Berdy, a 2021 graduate. While at Altamont, Simms sat on the Honor Court, participated in Heritage Panel, played soccer, and ran track and cross country. He is also an award-winning photographer. He is a Miree honor graduate and a member of the 8-year club. He is attending Williams College this fall.

Photo Credit: Belmont Studios



JUSTIN ONWENU

Class of 2014

Tell me about yourself.

I was born in Detroit, Michigan, and I started Altamont in 9th grade. I graduated from Rice University. While at Rice, I was the SGA president. I moved to Michigan in the summer of 2019 and have been doing environmental justice work locally.

How did Altamont shape your interest in politics?

Dr. Williams and Mr. Frye were two of my favorite teachers, and my favorite classes were history and biology. I felt tugged in different directions through interests in medicine, history and political science, and I merged that with being interested in public health. Altamont prepared me to think about issues critically, and I learned how to be a good writer and make clear arguments through the English program.

What is your most important memory?

Debate tournaments jump out. Traveling and taking different sides of an argument within a couple of hours are fun memories. I also have fond memories of senior year; we had a very small class, and I specifically remember having interesting conversations in the lunchroom, as well as basketball games and fundraising for SGA. There was a general feeling of a small, tight-knit community.

What is the most important thing you learned?

The close community allowed me to understand where people were coming from. You had people who didn't care at all about what was going on outside of school, but there were also those who were really into topics like the 2012 presidential election. People were coming from so many different directions that, between doing sports, SGA and debate, I had a chance to get an overview of many different perspectives.

Justin Onwenu serves as the youngest member of the Inaugural Michigan Advisory Council on Environmental Justice and Black Leadership Advisory Council, both under the direction of Governor Gretchen Whitmerstart. Previously, he served as a Detroit-based environmental justice organizer where he advocated for city ordinances that protected drinking water, secured funds to protect children from poor air quality and built diverse coalitions during COVID-19.

How has COVID personally affected you?

I started my job with the Sierra Club because I wanted to be on the ground and go door-to-door via civic and church meetings. COVID made everything virtual, but it forced me to change my approach to advocacy work; it became a lot more policy oriented. Before COVID, we were planning potlucks and protests, and now things are very writing intensive and related to policy.

What's the biggest social challenge of our time?

Democracy. Whether it's environmental issues or workers' rights, we need a functioning democracy, and we need people engaged in order to get anything done.

What did Altamont do best?

I realized the importance of getting involved and getting people together. One of the reasons I was able to go to Altamont was due to an anonymous donor. That's an example of paying it forward. The spirit of being there for people was how I chose my university, and I take this approach in the work I do now. Overall, this approach to leadership was something I learned from Altamont.



Interview by Tyler Walley, a 2021 graduate. While at Altamont, Tyler participated in Student Government Association (SGA), Young Democrats, cross country and track and field. He is a Miree honor graduate and a member of the 8-year club. In the fall, he is attending Duke University where he will be studying political science.

Photo Credit: Belmont Studios



Sam Elliott and Houston King

HOUSTON KING

Class of 1989

Sitting on the red brick wall outside Patton Gym, I eagerly waited for my mom to get off work to pick me up. Every day in 5th grade, this was my routine. Three weeks into the new school year, I was hard at play with the ants on the brick when I heard the sound of battery-powered wheels moving toward me. My eyes met a golf cart and its driver, our school's security guard, Mr. Bell. "I'm Mr. Bell. What's your name?" he said to me in his hearty, southern accent. I quickly gave him my name and why I was at school so late. He laughed and an instant connection formed.

Day after day, Mr. Bell and his golf cart promptly greeted me at 4:15 p.m. He told me stories of his days in the army, his high school years, and his life as a pastor. My continuous conversations with Mr. Bell have inspired me to seek out the stories that define people. Learning others' stories allows me to learn about myself. This is why I want to continue pursuing a life of storytelling through fiction and documentary filmmaking.

It's no surprise that Altamont alum Houston King '89 also found his love for the arts and storytelling by connecting with the faculty at Altamont in and outside of the classroom. In a conversation I had with him recently, we discussed our shared love for English classes at Altamont and how, as he puts it, they were and are "tremendously impactful" on our perspectives of the world. For King, the class that made him fall in love with visual arts was American Art in the 20th Century taught by Mr. Martin Hames. This class lead King into a life of art appreciation and eventually into becoming a storyteller on the screen as a producer and filmmaker.

"The type of literature we read and the analysis we did at Altamont helped me build my own taste of what I thought was quality material," King said. Extensive reading and analysis of both English and Russian literature helped King "set the bar high on not taking simple approaches to storytelling, but really making complicated, nuanced situations accessible."

Houston King is an independent producer of 13 narrative films, three documentaries and 150 commercials. King recently produced *Hearts Beat Loud* starring Nick Offerman as well as *Support the Girls* starring Regina Hall, which received Gotham award nominations for Best Screenplay and Best Actress, and a Spirit Nomination for Best Actress. He has also sold 60 films and theatrically distributed ten films.

As someone looking to also pursue a career in film, it was inspiring to hear King's perspective on the importance of art in our culture. More than anything though, King shared with me a sentiment I strongly believe in. Finding success in an industry as competitive as film requires a great amount of vulnerability. King and I both believe in the power of exposing oneself to new ideas and experiences, knowing that the initial discomfort will lead to growth. Altamont has prepared both of us well for this challenge.



Article by Matthew Mugweru, a 2021 graduate. While at Altamont, he was actively involved in theatre as a lead actor and stage manager; served as president and treasurer of

SGA; played varsity soccer and track and field; served as a member of Altamont's IDEA Task Force and was a member of the Miree Center and Heritage Panel. He is part of the 8-year club. In the fall, he is attending Columbia University where he will be studying film with a concentration in business management.

Photo Credit: Belmont Studios



CHRISTOPHER KELLY

Class of 1967 (BUS)

&

STEPHEN KELLY

Class of 1994

I recently had the pleasure of visiting my grandparents' home with my family. As most conversations go with rising high school seniors, we quickly got to the topic of college and career. Both my grandfather, Christopher Kelly '67, and father, Stephen Kelly '94, are ophthalmologists. I was curious how the traditions of Birmingham University School (BUS) and Altamont shaped their journeys into medicine.

I heard tales of influential teachers like Mr. Lightfoot, Sra. Alvarez, Madame Classé and Mr. Kinney. I added to the list Dr. Nelson, Mrs. Lusa, Mr. T and Mrs. Awad. My father and I even have Mr.

Palmer, Mrs. Gerety and Mrs. Keith in common. The theme among these influencers was their ability to build confidence and encourage a strong work ethic. My grandfather described BUS as "small enough to let you know you are important." He went on to say "Altamont appears to prepare students so that college is not a shock."

My dad agreed, adding that as a college student, "I never had to study for English." He also shared that a hard-fought B in Mr. Palmer's 11th grade English course had more impact than an A in his college-level English courses.

Christopher Kelly, M.D., has been on staff at UAB Callahan Eye Hospital since 1978, serving as the president of medical staff in 1991-93 and chief of staff in 2012-17.

Stephen Kelly, M.D., is the service chief of ophthalmology at Grandview Medical Center and president of hospital medical staff at UAB Callahan Eye Hospital and Clinics. He also runs his own private practice.

The science department held a very special place for them both. Their teachers fostered an environment that encouraged curiosity. It was okay to venture a guess, right or wrong. Mrs. Clifford (a Challenger finalist for Alabama), my dad's chemistry teacher, was the first to point out that if you have written a research paper, you are now an expert on that topic. This served my father well. He authored and published seven research papers before he began medical school.

I am very grateful for the opportunities that Altamont has provided for my family. There are many times I've asked, "why do I need to know this?" The answer echoed from my family is: "the purpose is to be educated." This has been the answer since at least the 1960s. Perhaps another ophthalmologist is in the making!



Article by Olivia "JoJo" Kelly, a rising senior who is very excited to have a normal school year this fall. Having been at Altamont since 5th grade, JoJo is involved in Heritage Panel through the Miree Center and is a peer tutor.

Altamont kicked off the school year with four new spaces created for students. The COVID pandemic necessitated creating areas that were socially distanced. These latest additions were invaluable this past year, and we are grateful to all of the donors who helped make these new spaces possible.

The Knights Den is our new collaboration area for middle schoolers (5th/6th grades). Removing the choir room and band lockers enabled us to create this multipurpose space that can be utilized in between classes, during lunch and during free time. Teachers also use this classroom space when doing co-curricular activities that involve the entire grade. Featuring work spaces and comfortable chairs, this area gives our middle schoolers a place to call their own during the school day.

The Senior Commons is the go-to area for our oldest students. Lockers and two administrative offices were removed last summer to create more opportunities for social distancing. The result was a new, open space with comfortable chairs, sofas, work tables and lots of natural light. While this space was used as a classroom during the pandemic, you'll often find only seniors in this special area before and after school.

The College Counseling Suite was created to support our impressive college counseling program. This student-focused area features movable tables and chairs for one-on-one help sessions and grade-level workshops. This space also has the technology capabilities to host virtual visits for college representatives.

The Orange Bowl is a collaborative student area that students use for group projects. Additionally, this space was used throughout the pandemic as a classroom because desks could be easily moved to accommodate larger classes. Two classrooms were removed to create this open-aired venue. It has become the go-to hangout area during lunch and before and after school.



The Orange Bowl



The Knights Den

College Counseling Suite



Senior Commons



Allegheny College
Alverno College
American University
Appalachian State University
Auburn University
Bard College
Barnard College
Baylor University
Belmont University
Berry College
Birmingham-Southern College
Bocconi University
Boston University
Bryn Mawr College
Bucknell University
Butler University
California Polytechnic (San Luis Obispo)
Case Western Reserve University
Chapman University
Clark University
Clemson University
College of Charleston
Colorado School of Mines
Columbia University
Connecticut College
Davidson College
Denison University
Drexel University
Duke University
Elon University (2)
Embry-Riddle (Daytona Beach)
Emory University
Florida A & M
Florida State University
Fordham University
Franklin & Marshall College
Furman University
George Mason University

George Washington University
Georgetown College
Gettysburg College
Goucher College
Hampden-Sydney College
Hollins University
Holy Cross College/University of Notre Dame
Hong Kong University of Science & Technology
Howard University
Indiana University
Jefferson (East Falls Campus)
Johns Hopkins University
Kenyon College
Louisiana State University
Loyola Marymount University
McGill University
Middlebury College
Mount Holyoke College
New York University
North Carolina State University
Northeastern University
Northwestern University
Oglethorpe University
Pepperdine University
Prairie View A & M University
Reed College
Rhodes College
Rice University (2)
Rollins College
Royal Holloway, University of London
Samford University (2)
Santa Clara University

Seton Hall University
Sewanee: The University of the South
Skidmore College
Smith College
Southern Methodist University
Southwestern College
Spelman College
Spring Hill College
St John's College (Annapolis)
St Lawrence University
St. Thomas University
Syracuse University
Tabor College
Texas Christian University
The American University of Paris
The College of Wooster
The University of Texas at Austin
Trinity College Dublin
Trinity University
Troy University
Tufts University (3)
Tulane University (2)
University of Alabama
University of Alabama at Birmingham
University of Alabama in Huntsville
University of Arizona
University of Auckland
University of California (Davis)
University of California (Los Angeles)
University of California (San Diego)
University of California (Santa Barbara)
University of California (Santa Cruz)

University of Colorado Boulder
University of Delaware
University of Denver
University of Georgia
University of Illinois
University of Kentucky
University of Miami
University of Michigan
University of Mississippi
University of Montevallo
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
University of Oregon
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh
University of Puget Sound
University of Richmond
University of San Diego
University of San Francisco
University of South Alabama
University of Southern California
University of Utah
University of Virginia
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin (Madison)
Vanderbilt University
Virginia Polytechnic
Washington University in St. Louis
Wesleyan University
Whitman College
Williams College
Wofford College
Xavier University of Louisiana
Bold—matriculation



Creating Intentional COLLABORATION

Over the last two years, Altamont's Professional Learning Cohorts (PLCs) have become an ideal opportunity to create community and authentic collaboration between faculty. Co-facilitated by Rob Dominguez and JoAnna Laney, this year-long program provides intentional professional development and growth on specific topics. Providing a structured program that gives time to discuss and brainstorm ideas creates meaningful and long-lasting effects for students.

This year, the PLC topics were instructional classroom design and assessment. Participating faculty included Alex Melonas, Pattie Bank, Nadia Barajas, Katherine Berdy, Peter Rosborough,

Lia Gerety, Niko Tsivourakis, Andrew Nelson, Eva Arellano and Laura Ottaviani-Chacón. This voluntary program extends over all grade levels and across all disciplines.

In the instructional classroom design group, projects ranged from a World War II podcast to interacting with students from Madrid to create a seven-day trip itinerary to creating a year-long plan on how to live in France. These practical projects resonated with both students and faculty alike. According to Sra. Barajas, "It was very rewarding to see them use the language they are learning in a real context with a real audience and a purpose." In the living-in-France scenario, "students felt

empowered when offered the choice of topic. They connected more deeply with it because it was their choice,” said Mr. Rosborough. Mr. Dominguez discovered a similar situation. “My biggest takeaway is that learning in a way that prepares students for real-world experiences is the most impactful route to keeping them engaged, curious, and energized,” he said.

The assessment group looked at what authentic assessment means. For some faculty, that meant revising existing assessments. Other faculty completely reworked their assessments, allowing their students to choose what parts they wanted to complete. Ms. O-C wrote twice as many math problems as needed for an assessment. The students could choose which two out of four problems at a minimum that they wanted to complete. If they completed more, she graded all the work and chose the best two problems to count toward the grade.

Mr. T’s English assessment used an interpretation exercise that utilized photography to express personality traits. This assessment was submitted and chosen as a presentation at a national

middle school conference this summer. Mr. T and Ms. Gillespie, who helped strengthen the art component, co-presented the assessment at the conference. For Sra. Arellano, the biggest takeaway was that “it is possible to create rigorous, stress-free assessments where students naturally apply their second language in a real-world situation.”

Overall, the faculty value the PLCs because of the opportunities for collaboration and partnership with other colleagues. According to Ms. O-C, “my favorite part of this project was the give-and-take conversations with my colleagues. The PLC gave us set times, with the same group of people, so our conversations could continue and evolve throughout the year.”

Even in a difficult year, PLCs provided an important outlet for our faculty. “Amid scheduling difficulties with virtual learning, the growth and congeniality still happened. It was powerful to see,” said Ms. Laney. As this program continues to organically evolve, PLCs will continue to be a primary way Altamont grows as a community.



Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA)

Last summer, Altamont sent letters to the community committing intentional efforts to increase the coordination of IDEA.

In response, we received letters from alumni, expressing concerns and providing suggestions and recommendations to address Altamont's history and culture regarding racism and social justice.

In August 2020, Altamont formed an IDEA Task Force made up of alumni, trustees, faculty, staff and students. The mission of the task force is to create immediate and long-term recommendations for the improvement of equity at Altamont by creating a more inclusive, equitable and respectful culture where all individuals feel welcomed and valued. The IDEA Task Force was initiated due to requests for racial equity; however, the work of this group encompasses the creation of an inclusive and equitable community where individuals regardless of race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation or any other aspect of their identity are able to contribute and fully participate in the Altamont community.

During the past school year, the task force has met monthly to discuss continued work around ten key priorities (see sidebar). Working groups created specific recommendations and action steps. While work has continued concurrently, we want to highlight two initiatives:

Incident Reporting Mechanism

To emphasize accountability and equity, and to promote an environment that is free of discrimination and harassment of any kind, the school has accepted a recommendation to create a new disciplinary committee, which will address violations of our statement of expectations and of our non-discrimination policy. History teacher Alex Melonas, Ph.D., has agreed to chair this committee.

Inclusive Curriculum

For the past several years, our English and history departments have worked to craft global curricula that help students understand race, racism, and white supremacy and educate students about the histories, cultures, and ideas of BIPOC individuals and communities. To view our current curricula, go to www.altamontschool.org/about/IDEA. We view this work not as accomplishments but instead as a foundation for conversations about ways we can continue to improve. Curriculum plays a vital role in helping all of Altamont's students feel welcome, affirmed, and safe at school and to see their own experiences, histories, and cultures in the classroom.

To learn more, go to www.altamontschool.org/about/IDEA.

IDEA Priorities

- Commit to creating incident reporting mechanisms
- Commit to improving the student handbook
- Commit to increasing BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) representation among faculty and administration
- Commit to developing an inclusive curriculum
- Commit to BIPOC representation among the student body
- Commit to create mentorship support for BIPOC students
- Commit to board, faculty and staff, student and parent training
- Board of Trustee Commitment
- Alumni Association Commitment
- Parents' Association Commitment



Alum Had Three-Day *Winning Streak* on Jeopardy

A dream came true for Lucy Ricketts, a 2004 graduate who completed a three-day winning streak on Jeopardy. Her final winnings totaled \$79,499 but the memory of the experience was the real prize.

Lucy attended her last two years of high school at The Altamont School before graduating from The University of Alabama and Savannah College of Art and Design. In the summer of 2020, Lucy took an online Jeopardy test one day on a whim after work. After two rounds of testing, the producers interviewed each potential contestant. After the interview, Lucy was told she was in the contestant lottery for the next 18 months. Surprisingly, she received a call about two weeks later from a producer giving her three taping dates before finally taping at the end of November with the show airing January 12, 2021.

Her taping was the first day Ken Jennings, the famous Jeopardy champion, hosted and was the first day for the staff to be back in the studio after the death of Alex Trebek. “That was an honor, but also an emotionally fraught experience,” said Lucy.

While the Jeopardy experience was full of great memories, Lucy said her favorite part was “the way it felt to be up there, on stage, in the middle of competition. For someone who loves trivia

that much, this is the moment you’ve worked for. To be doing the thing that you do best, on the biggest stage and everything forced into a flash of thought and movement is a thrill I don’t think I could get anywhere else,” Lucy said. She is also grateful to now be a part of the tight-knit Jeopardy community of other contestants and producers. “That is the part I wasn’t expecting and have found the most joy in experiencing,” said Lucy.

Lucy has fond memories of her time at Altamont and appreciates the guidance and involvement of her teachers. “My favorite part of my time at Altamont would have to be the positive relationships with all of my teachers, who were always able to bring out the best in me as a student and didn’t give up on encouraging and supporting me. My teachers helped keep me going forward and developing that love of learning along the way,” said Lucy.

And if you have ever been interested in trying out for Jeopardy, Lucy would heartily encourage it! “There’s no other experience like it. I would also add that it helps to have as broad a knowledge base as possible—listen to everything, read whatever is in front of you. There’s information to be picked up all over the place and doing so and weaving the connections together in your own brain is key to success in trivia,” said Lucy.

The C. Kyser Miree Ethical Leadership Center

For 11 years, it's been my privilege and honor to build a foundation for excellent leadership education and community engagement through The C. Kyser Miree Ethical Leadership Center. It is with sincere enthusiasm that I hand over the reigns to Beth Dille, The Miree Center's new director, as I transition back to my first love of teaching in the classroom as Altamont's 9th grade English teacher.

I've had the incredible privilege of working with Niko Tsivourakis, Laura Ottaviani-Chacón, Dan Carsen and Andrew Nelson to bring memorable Miree experiences that meet students wherever they are. I don't think I can ever thank them enough for locking arms with me to create opportunities that truly serve Altamont's mission.

To date, over 100 students have earned a Miree commendation with their diploma, and many more have dipped their toes in the waters of service

learning, global citizenship, project design/management, and diversity training. Thus, my last and most sincere appreciation goes out to each of the students in any of the programs, for their work involves the intangible and gritty leadership attributes of risk, courage, empathy, self-awareness, honesty, and love.

Moreover, we will all continue to celebrate the legacy of Kyser Miree, in whose memory we hold the highest standard of brave, authentic, and empathetic leadership.

With gratitude to each of you,
Katherine Berdy '91



Welcome Beth Dille!

Beth Dille, the new director of The Miree Center, has been leading students and adults in experiential education and service her entire career, in places as far away as Thailand and as close as Nauvoo, Alabama.

For the last several years she has been director of the Environmental Center at Camp McDowell, which is where she and Altamont became acquainted. She has helped guide our youngest students in Fall Project Week programs and has come to know and love Altamont in the process.

She has a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Wisconsin and a master's degree in education from Liberty University.

She is also working on another master's degree in organizational leadership.

What makes us the most excited about Ms. Dille is the way she talks about education and how she aligns herself with Altamont's principles. She wants all individuals to grow through holistic experiential education in order to become the best versions of themselves as people and citizens.



A Conversation with 3 Miree Graduates



Emory Cox serves as financial policy advisor to U.S. Senator Tommy Tuberville (R-AL). Prior to this role, he served as associate director of the White House National Economic Council.



Lawrence Perry is a law student at the University of Alabama. He is a WBHM Jr. Board member and secretary of Altamont's Alumni Board.



Based in Denmark, **Elizabeth Anne Brown** is a freelance journalist. Her work has appeared in *National Geographic*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Atlantic*.

Katherine Berdy recently sat down with three alumni from the Class of 2014 to discuss the impact The Miree Center had on their lives.

Berdy: Tell me about the early days of The Miree Center.

Cox: When we first began Miree projects, they were collaborative yet tailored to the student in a personalized way. For instance, I started with an idea in estate planning and ended up working with the City of Pell City.

Berdy: Looking back, what do you think participation in The Miree Center gave you?

Cox: The process introduced me to so many people and helped me develop meaningful connections and communication skills. I utilized resources and people connected with the school to broaden my horizons. We were so blessed to be able to learn from these resources and relationships. It introduced students to leaders. Whether guest speakers or through projects, it was about connections, challenges and successes. The process helped us understand issues and we learned each step of the way.

Perry: Back then, I connected with Randall Woodfin, who was the city attorney at the time.

He's now the mayor of Birmingham, and I'm still doing municipal work.

Berdy: The Miree Center marries a personal passion to a need. Elizabeth Anne, you helped run the nursery for English as a Second Language (ESL) families at Independent Presbyterian Church?

Brown: Yes, and I am still in touch with some of the participants! And, along with the curriculum and other opportunities, the requirements helped us have a more global perspective. Emory, Lawrence and I were really involved in Model UN. There is a lot of international awareness that we earned as Miree students.

Berdy: What's the most important leadership skill or attribute students should develop?

Perry: Empathy is the ability to really genuinely imagine yourself in someone else's position. Also, communication skills (writing and speaking) are important and often undervalued.

Brown: I agree that empathy is an important skill to develop.

LOG OFF: Rethinking Social Media

Emma Lembke, a 2021 graduate, created LOG OFF, a movement dedicated to rethinking social media by teens for teens. Starting as Emma's Miree project, the idea for LOG OFF came after Emma noticed social media's negative effect on her mental health. "The constant bombardment of a never-ending feed worsened my anxiety and left me with unrealistic expectations for my life and the way I look," said Emma.

Now, LOG OFF has grown into a global movement with a Teen Leadership Council made up of 30 teens from 13 different countries. Podcast episodes, blog posts, a character education curriculum and digital detox challenges are just a few of the ways the LOG OFF movement furthers the dialogue about the multifaceted nature of social media and promotes a healthy usage of it.

Four additional Altamont students have been involved. Hannah Ashraf '21 is the director of outreach and communications. "I got involved because I know it is a worldwide issue, and I want to be a part of the solution," said Hannah. Lilla Carroll '21 got involved because she is "interested in exploring the ways that online communication, information circulation and image-based culture interact with mental illness in young girls." Maddie Thomas '21 hosts the podcast series and is interested in educating people about online subcultures.

Junior Sophia Schefano is a member of the well-being initiative. "I've loved getting to know people from all over the world. Also, learning more about how social algorithms work has been eye opening," said Sophia. Her advice to younger students regarding social media is "never compare yourself to others. You only see the highlights that people want you to see on social media."



From left, Maddie Thomas, Lilla Carroll, Emma Lembke and Sophia Schefano

As Emma heads to college in August, she hopes to see the movement "remain rooted in uplifting youth stories, specifically within our new legislative advocacy campaign (Tech(nically) Politics) and through a future conference with other digital wellness organizations."

Emma gives the following advice to students: "Social media should only be a tool for self-expression and happiness in your life. But if you are ever overwhelmed, remember there is a community of teens ready to listen, support, and help you through LOG OFF."

To learn more about LOG OFF, go to logoffmovement.org.



National Merit Scholar and Semifinalists

Hannah Ashraf was awarded a \$2,500 National Merit Scholarship. Earlier this spring, Hannah, along with classmates Maaz Zuberi, Lilla Carroll, Robert Pritchard and Tyler Walley, was distinguished first as a National Merit semifinalist, then as a finalist. After being selected as a finalist, Hannah competed against more than 15,000 students nationwide to earn the Merit Scholar title.

The nationwide pool of finalists represents less than 1% of U.S. high school seniors. Over 1.5 million juniors in more than 21,000 high schools entered the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2019 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), which served as the initial screen of program entrants.



2021 Presidential Scholars Candidate

Amelia Neiman was selected as a U.S. Presidential Scholars candidate. This program, established in 1964 by executive order of the president, recognizes and honors our nation's most distinguished graduating high school seniors. Approximately 4,500 seniors, 96 from Alabama, were nominated nationwide as 2021 U.S. Presidential Scholars candidates. Application to the Presidential Scholars program is by invitation only; students are invited to apply based on their SAT or ACT scores or nomination by a Chief State School Officer.

Altamont is proud to have two Presidential Scholars: David Goldenberg in 1997 and Rakesh Goli in 2012.

STUDENTS EXCEL at Debate Tournaments

Congrats to Isabella Maldia (#1 seed in Lincoln-Douglas), Arthur Anders and Manish Yalamanchilli (#1 seed in policy debate) and Colin Hatcher and Josh Potter (#2 seed in policy debate) for qualifying for the National Speech and Debate Association Tournament held June 13-18, 2021. They represented Altamont against the best teams in the nation.



From left, Isabella Maldia, Colin Hatcher, Josh Potter, Arthur Anders, Manish Yalamanchilli and Coach Lee Quinn

Earlier this year, Altamont Debate had additional successes. Parker Denson and Johnny Stumpff finished in the Final Four at the prestigious Yale University Tournament in Junior Varsity. Parker also won Second Speaker overall. Isabella was the overall Lincoln Douglas Winner and number one speaker in her division at the Georgetown Debate Tournament. Wesley Sudarshan and Pranav Goli finished in the Final Four at the St. James Tournament and earned a bid to the Tournament of Champions.

Math, Science and Writing Awards



Nandhini Gutti, Aubrey Sanders, McNair Shah, Ivan Riley and Bennett Mitchell achieved high scores on the AMC series, one of the most prestigious mathematics competitions in the country. Nandhini scored in the top 5% nationally. Over 300,000 students participate annually in over 6,000 schools.



Sebastian Skidmore is one of the 30 national finalists for the 2020 virtual Broadcom MASTERS science competition. Sebastian's science project from last year, Vinegar and Soil: Soil Acidification Improves Growth in Simulated Martian Soil, was one of two winning projects from the state of Alabama.



Izzy Sellers, Cruz Cunill and Sterling McDonald placed first, second and third, respectively, in the middle school essay category in the University of Mississippi Writing Competition.

Scholastic Art & Writing Awards



The Scholastic Art & Writing competition is the nation's longest-running and most prestigious scholarship and recognition initiative for creative teens in grades 7-12. Altamont had many art, photography and creative writing students win awards in the regional competition. Pictured above are the award winners. Please go to www.altamontschool.org/news for a complete list of award recipients.



National Awards

Ryan Vance won gold and silver national awards for his photography. Receiving national medals places Ryan within the top 1% of all submissions for this competition.

Visual Arts Achievement Awards



Several Altamont students won awards in District IV-A in the state of Alabama Visual Arts Achievement Awards: Angus Brantley—Best of Middle School Computer Images; Nish Doppalapudi—Best of Middle School Photography; and Merritt Edwards—Best of Upper School Drawing.

Orchestra and Jazz Band

In the winter concert, Altamont’s Orchestra performed selections from Beethoven, Sibelius, and Chesnokov plus two pieces from contemporary composers Brian Balmages and Lennie Niehaus. In the spring, the 7th-8th Jazz Band performed styles like jazz, bossa nova, samba and rock. The Upper School Jazz Band played classic charts from Thelonious Monk and Mercer Ellington as well as modern charts from Gordon Goodwin’s Big Phat Band and Mike Tomaro.



Photo Credit: Belmont Studios

Matthew Poczatek placed 1st chair in All-State Band, besting other alto saxophone students from eight districts in Birmingham.

Theatre

This fall, Altamont Theatre students participated in A Retrospective of American Cartoonists. The works of Jules Feiffer, James Thurber, Shel Silverstein, Charles Schultz and Edward Gorey were featured in bi-weekly video releases. This spring, the Upper School Musical Theatre class presented an original music video called “Welcome to the ‘60s” on the Altamont field. **To watch these videos, go to www.altamontschool.org/arts/art-at-altamont1.**

Cross Country

The cross country teams competed in the AHSAA State Championship. Jack Nichols (14th overall) and Frances Overton (9th overall) earned All-State honors, leading their teams to 5th and 6th place finishes in the highly competitive 3A division. Both teams capped an exciting season that saw 10 top three team finishes and two section titles. The teams qualified for the state meet with first place finishes as Class 3A Section 2 champions at the sectional meet. During the sectional meet, the girls team won with 7 runners in the top 10. Frances Overton was section champion and Margarett Berdy placed 2nd. The boys team was led by Jack Nichols (2nd), Jesse Hungerpillar (3rd), Gage Bell (9th) and Harris Strang (10th).



Volleyball

The volleyball team finished 3rd in the state in 2A volleyball with a 24-3 record. The team has been ranked 3rd in the state four out of the last five seasons. During the state tournament, they beat Orange Beach in the quarterfinals 3-0. They lost to G. W. Long in the semi-finals in a hard-fought match 3-1.

Basketball

The girls basketball team capped a successful season with a Sweet Sixteen appearance in the AHSAA Class 2A State tournament, where they fell just short to Spring Garden. The team was anchored by the senior leadership of Zoya Bashir, Kalia Todd, Samantha Torch, Lauren Perry and Tiana Shelton. Tiana also scored her 1,000th point as an Altamont Knight on Feb. 9. The boys basketball team also competed in the Area 10 2A tournament, advancing to the first round of the AHSAA Class 2A State tournament, where they lost to Westminster.



Baseball

The baseball team finished a great season with an appearance in the AHSAA playoffs against Southeastern. This was the first time the baseball team has made the playoffs in 21 years. Highlights of the season were victories against Indian Springs (8-5) and Westminster (6-2).



Outdoor Track & Field: Girls State Champs, Boys State Runner Up

The girls track and field team are the state champions and the boys team are the runner up in the AHSAA Class 2A Track & Field State Championship. The girls team took a commanding lead in the team points and never looked back while the boys team

fought hard to edge out Cold Springs and capture 2nd place. Several students won state in individual events. Carson Hicks is the state champion in 200m and 400m. Kaia Todd is the state champion in 100m hurdles (setting a state record), high jump (setting a state record) and triple jump. Kalia Todd is the state champion in long jump. Amelia Neiman is the state champion in 300m hurdles.

Indoor Track & Field

The indoor track and field teams competed in the AHSAA 1A-3A state meet. The girls team finished 4th and the boys team finished 5th in the state. Carson Hicks is the state champion in the 60m dash, and she won the bronze medal in the 400m dash. Kaia Todd is the state champion in the 60m hurdles, and she won the bronze medal in the 60m dash. Both the boys (Matthew Poczatek, Aaron Swiney, Jesse Hungerpiller, Jack Langloh) and girls (Amelia Neiman, Lily Davis, Kate Nichols, Carson Hicks) 4x400 relay teams are state champions. Both the girls 4x200 relay team (Lily Davis, Amelia Neiman, Merritt Fulmer, Kaia Todd) and the boys 4x800 relay team (Jack Nichols, Gage Bell, Aaron Swiney, Jesse Hungerpiller) captured silver medals. Jack Nichols set a new indoor school record in the 1600m (4:39) as did our boys 4x800 relay (8:49).



Golf

The golf team won their sectional tournament and advanced to the sub-state tournament. They finished 3rd in team competition at sub-state, just one place away from earning a trip to the state tournament. Merritt Fulmer won a sudden death playoff at sectionals and competed in the girls sub-state tournament. Vinay Yerramsetti advanced to the AHSAA state championship and tied for 3rd place individually in Class 1A-2A.



Tennis: Girls State Runner Up

The tennis teams completed their seasons at the state finals. The girls team placed 2nd overall (state runner up) with 55 points, just 8 points shy of first place. The boys team placed 3rd overall in the state. Margarett Berdy is the singles state champion for 4A-5A. Sid Doppalapudi and Bart Stephens are state champions at #3 doubles.



Soccer

The boys soccer team placed 2nd in the area and made it to the state playoffs, being edged out by American Christian Academy with a 1-0 loss. The girls team lost a heartbreaking second round playoff game to Indian Springs with a 2-1 score. This was the first year that the girls moved up to 4A-5A due to the success multiplier. Even though Altamont is a 2A school competing in a 4A-5A division, they were ranked as high as second in the state and spent the entire season ranked in the top six in the state.



Seniors Sign Letters of Intent



Kalia Todd, Florida A&M University, volleyball



Kaia Todd, Tulane University, track & field



Tiana Shelton, Tabor College, tennis



Isabella Brown, Hollins University, volleyball

Did Mrs. Ackermann influence your life?

We are thrilled to announce a new scholarship that honors the teaching legacy of Joyce Ackermann. For 25 years (1964-1989), she inspired English and Creative Writing students at Brooke Hill and Altamont. To this day, Mrs. Ackermann vividly remembers the alumni she taught.

With enthusiasm, insight, and wit, Joyce shepherded her students through a range of challenging literature from Dante's *Inferno* to *Moby Dick*, from *Canterbury Tales* to *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* and *Don Quixote*, teaching them to appreciate the genius of the authors and their reflections on human nature. To her, the study of literature could enhance character development in the reader. Joyce also offered popular elective courses such as The Bible in Literature. In her classes, students learned to express themselves clearly in essay writing and were encouraged

to create their own fiction and poetry. The scholarship provides tuition assistance to a student who has been recommended by his or her current English teacher as someone who loves to read and discuss literature.

To donate, go to www.altamontschool.org/giving. A special book of memories from contributors will be shared with Mrs. Ackermann. This scholarship is spearheaded by Madame Classé and Anne Wideman Barton '74. A special thanks to them for their incredible efforts in honoring Mrs. Ackermann.



Remembering Catherine Caldwell Cabaniss '57 (1940-2021)

The family of Catherine Caldwell Cabaniss '57 recently donated four significant works of art by Catherine to the school.

One work is "Water-Based" (oil on canvas, painted in 1990) which was part of an exhibition in the Czech Republic where her husband Bill Cabaniss served as American ambassador (2004-06). The piece depicts environmental sensitivities. Another piece from this series is on view at the Birmingham-Shuttlesworth

International Airport. The Cabaniss family has been a longtime friend to Brooke Hill and Altamont since the 1950s. Altamont's comprehensive fine arts program is anchored by the Cabaniss-Kaul Center for the Arts. Featuring the latest in lighting, audio-visual equipment, and acoustical elements, as well as theatre-style seating for 500 guests, the center is a place for students to showcase their talent and our Altamont and Birmingham community to gather.



Bruce Denson SCHOLARSHIPS

Bruce Denson is a 1968 graduate and student-athlete of Birmingham University School (BUS) and an integral part of Altamont's success. Bruce served Altamont's Board of Trustees for 32 years (retired in 2020) and is most known for his work on the finance committee. He cares deeply about the school, offering advice, strategy and generosity. According to Chris Nicholson, president of the Board of Trustees, "Bruce is truly a foundation of our community, and an irreplaceable part of our past, present, and future."

One special strength of Altamont is its scholarship offerings. Bruce was very involved in the inception of Altamont's scholarship process in the late 1980s. Passionate about education, Bruce started scholarships for new students to mark his retirement from the Board of Trustees and his career in insurance and risk management.



The Bruce Denson Scholarships are for new 5th-12th grade students who have extraordinary personal drive and team leadership potential. When making arrangements for the scholarships, Bruce remembered that his own father sacrificed a lot to put him through BUS. He gives back in this spirit.

If you would like to know more, please contact the Admissions Office at 205-445-1232.



Rising senior Audrey Williams, left, won the award this year and Lauren Perry '21, right, won the award last year. Dr. Henry Nelson is pictured in the center.

The Nelson Scholar Award

The Nelson Scholar Award (2016) began as a way for the Nelson family to help others enjoy the same advantages that they experienced at Altamont. Given annually to a rising senior, the award recognizes meritorious students who make notable contributions while maximizing extracurricular and academic opportunities. The monetary award will be applied toward tuition and is made possible by Sean Nelson '05, Jon-Marc Nelson '01 and their parents, Dr. Henry and Marlene Nelson.

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