

Tab 1

The Heart of Mont Alto Speaks

Don't Let Our Stories Be Erased

Collected Testimonials from Students, Alumni, Present and Past Faculty and Staff

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Penn State Mont Alto

Why This Matters

This document is a compilation of statements from students, alumni, faculty, and staff, both past and present, who have been impacted by Penn State Mont Alto.

Each testimonial reflects the heart, history, and value of this campus, and why it must remain a vital part of the Penn State system. These voices speak not only to what Mont Alto has been, but to what it continues to be: a place of growth, opportunity, and community.

Please remember: every statement here is a person, a voice, a story, a connection, and a testament to the power of Penn State Mont Alto.

STUDENTS

Jawad Malik, Class of 2026, Business Management & Marketing

I've attended four different universities. I've transferred, dropped out, and restarted more times than I ever thought I would. When I arrived at Penn State Mont Alto during my sophomore year, I didn't expect much. I didn't expect to stay.

But what kind of place, what kind of people, must I have found here, that I stayed for the next two years and am now entering my third?

This campus didn't just hold me, it healed me.

I've been the "problem child." The kid who couldn't settle. The one who kept moving, unsure if he belonged anywhere. And then I came here... and for the first time, I didn't feel like I was just surviving college, I was finally living it.

The compassion, the joy, the quiet kindness I've found at Mont Alto made me want to do something I've never done before: give back. I stepped up as a student leader, an advocate, and a voice, not for recognition, but because this place, and the people in it, made me believe in something bigger than myself.

I don't usually put myself out there like this. But Mont Alto is worth it. This campus gave me stability, growth, and purpose. And I will fight for it, because it fought for me, when I didn't even know I needed it.

And if Penn State is a family...

Mont Alto is the part that made me feel at home.

We are Penn State.

And I am Mont Alto.

Yara Amleh, Class of 2026, Nursing

“It’s difficult to summarize all the good that Penn State Mont Alto brings to its students, faculty, and community in a single statement—but it’s undeniable that this campus is something special. As we worked tirelessly to collect testimonies and petition signatures in such a short time, I was amazed at how the community banded together so quickly to come to the campus’s rescue. Mont Alto may not be the largest, but it is active and impactful. Everyone sees something worth fighting for.

The small campus size should not be seen as a reason for closure. Instead, it fosters a close-knit community where students are known by name, mentorship thrives, and opportunities feel personal. It encourages compassion, leadership, and support in ways larger campuses cannot replicate.

As a student leader, I have big dreams for this campus. These initiatives are designed for both the next semester and the next generation. I have been working to expand involvement, introduce new organizations not found elsewhere in the Commonwealth, and implement meaningful infrastructure improvements. Most importantly, I have been nurturing a renewed passion for belonging. However, these ideas will remain dreams if this campus closes. I implore you to give Mont Alto a chance to bloom.

Mont Alto is a second chance for students who didn’t think college was within reach. It’s a place where first-generation college students find mentorship, where non-traditional students find flexibility, and where students from all walks of life find purpose. It is a place for aspiring nurses, engineers, foresters, and business leaders.

For my family, Mont Alto is more than a school – It’s home. My older sister, my brother, and I have all had the privilege of calling it ours. My parents have worked here. And until recently, there was no question that my younger sister would walk the same path. But with this closure looming, her future – and many others – suddenly hangs in uncertainty. She may now be forced to look elsewhere. And Penn State, the institution that has defined our family, may no longer be the answer.

We’ve done everything we can as students, but now we ask for your help. Please help us build on what already exists and fight for a future where Mont Alto not only exists but grows. We don’t just want to preserve this campus – we want to grow, invest, and protect the opportunities it offers for generations to come.

So I ask: what does Mont Alto mean to YOU?

Because for us, it’s not just a campus. It’s a legacy, a launchpad, and a lifeline – and it deserves the chance to continue doing what it does best: changing lives.”

Devonte Henry, Class of 2026, Business Management & Administration

"Mont Alto gave me the opportunity to continue playing soccer when I thought I wouldn't do anything with it after High School. It's given me a proper overview of what it's like to be an adult and being able to meet many new people that I'm glad I'm able to incorporate into my life for many years to come."

Araelia Summers, Class of 2027, Nursing

"I've been a student at Mont Alto for 2 years now, I am going into my third year. Mont Alto is a great campus, and it makes me incredibly sad to hear that we might shut down. I've met friends here that are now like family. There are so many amazing things that have come out of this. Mont Alto shouldn't be shut down."

Sarah Swope, Class of 2027, Agricultural Sciences

"Penn State Mont Alto is my home away from home and has opened my eyes to a world of opportunities. I am a member of their woodsmen's team and it has become one of my new passions. I have learned more than just in the classrooms but from the clubs and my newest friends who have taught me so much about their own majors and education. I could not imagine life without the forestry academy and Penn State Mont Alto."

Rachael, Class of 2028, Biology

"Being part of Penn State's 2+2 program at Mont Alto has allowed me to save money and still 'experience' living away from home, while still getting a wonderful education. Not just the professors, but other staff members (especially those at the Mill) are always willing to listen, give advice, or even just to give feedback on an assignment (thanks Thomas). The professors know you by name and will talk to you if they see you around campus outside of class. Even though I won't finish my degree at Mont Alto, the people and the campus will always be part of me. The staff and faculty at Mont Alto genuinely care about our success."

Sloane Stouffer, Class of 2027, Nursing

"Mont Alto is a small campus with a big heart."

The people of Mont Alto are kind and care about how you are and how you are doing. I talk with the people that work at the Mill everyday. I receive great help on projects and assignments from the people at the Academic Support Center. Every class I have, I can count on my teachers for advice and support. Everyone at Mont Alto never fails to help the students on campus. Penn State Mont Alto is a place that deserves to keep on living. It deserves to continue to help and enlighten students."

Gabby Olson, Class of 2026, Physical Therapy Assistant

“Being accepted into Penn State Mont Alto has been the greatest opportunity of my life—it didn’t just give me an education, it gave me purpose, growth, and a future I never thought I could have. Without this campus, I wouldn’t be the person I am today.”

Shakur Hamza, Class of 2026, Aerospace Engineering

“I enjoyed the space that Mont Alto gave me to make memories. The connections I made were very real and something that I will carry with me forever. The intimacy of this space allowed me to have a small family from faculty to students that allowed me to grow knowing help was there when I needed it.”

Michael Stoewer, Class of 2028, Psychology

“Penn State Mont Alto has given me a fantastic community to associate myself with. Without Mont Alto’s generous financial plans, great clubs, and passionate people who dedicate their lives to this I would have been lost. Penn State mont also has given me such a fun experience for college and while I haven’t been here long I would love to graduate here.”

Jamie Shoemaker, Class of 2027, Forensic Science

“If it wasn’t for the Mont Alto campus, I would not be part of the Penn State community. As an out-of-state, first-generation student, Mont Alto has provided me with access to affordable higher education close to home and has allowed me to make lifelong connections with faculty, staff, and peers. I may be a member of the Penn State community, but Mont Alto is my family.”

Caleb Johnston, Class of 2027, Information Technology

“From when I started at Mont Alto, I was very unsure about the kind of people I will meet and how my experience will go, but from my two years of attending, I have made a lot of new friends and met some amazing professors. I have had a great learning experience at Mont Alto as the professors I’ve had were really nice and most importantly made learning fun and enjoyable with their humor along the way.” matter, but I feel it’s something that should be taken because Mont Alto was definitely a college that stood out and was better than any other campus I’ve been to.”

Jenna Glass, Class of 2026, Nursing

“Mont Alto has made my college education so much easier with it being so close to home. The campus is beautiful and the new allied health building is stunning.”

Kyla Vieira Hoffner, Class of 2026, Psychology

“PennState Mont Alto means a lot to me. I can say that my college experience has been amazing because of this campus. Mont Alto is where I meet the best Professors, who care about their students. It is where I met my best friends. It is the place I became involved in research, aiming to advance knowledge in the field. I remember it being during MedCamp in highschool that I fell in love with this campus and told myself, “This is where I want to be”. Other than myself, my family has no history at PennState. I didn’t want to come to Mont Alto to fulfill some family legacy, I simply loved the campus for what it was. When I first started my college experience, I didn’t know what career I wanted to pursue, although I knew I loved psychology. Because of the help of the amazing staff members and professors, I made the decision to pursue what I love. I have been encouraged and supported by my professors and peers along this journey, as they have never given up on me. The community is small, but it is strong. Mont Alto is like family to the many students on this campus, including me. This was my dream campus since I was in high school, and it devastates me to know that some people want to shut that dream campus down. I still have one more year to complete my degree and my brother, who is a senior in high school, also plans to go to Mont Alto. I love this campus and it breaks my heart to know that he might not be able to have the wonderful experience I have had being on the campus all 4 years. As I said, this campus community is like a family. I have seen Mont Alto change many people’s lives for the better. For us to be stripped of that is shattering.”

Connor Alligood, Class of 2026, Psychology

“What doesn’t Mont Alto mean to me? This is one of the schools that is closest to my family, and is relatively one of the cheaper options when it comes to furthering my education. I’ve always wanted to go to Penn State, and the fact that a Commonwealth campus was just down the road from me saved a lot of hassle for me and my family. The education that I have received from this campus is nothing short of incredible. The instructors are some of the best that I have ever met, and if you take Mont Alto out, then the future Penn Staters will not be able to experience the bountiful knowledge that they can learn. While my first two semesters were not my best and I did drop out, Dr. Robin Yaure inspired me to continue my college education, and that could be future students that come to the campus. While my education is an important part of why I think the campus shouldn’t close, I also have to add the fact that the many friends I made are what made my college experience a blast. I wouldn’t have met the incredible people I now know today if it weren’t for this beautiful campus. If Mont Alto is shut down, then all the memories will be just that, memories. The athletics program is one of the best from the smaller campuses. If the campus closes, then the dreams for people who wanted to play at Mont Alto, will be just a dream. No one wants to see this beautiful campus go. I would please reconsider the closure for all the people whose dream it is to go to Penn State and do not have the funds to do so. That's what makes PSUMA so special, our community.”

Jocey Shields, Class of 2026, Physical Therapy Assistant

“Penn State Mont Alto is the most beautiful community that I have gotten the pleasure to be a part of. That may not mean much to you, the administration that is looking to close this campus, but it should. I have visited several campuses, from University Park, to Altoona and York, and I have yet to find a more flourishing academic environment.

The professors at Mont Alto are so clearly passionate about their fields, and equally passionate about their students’ success. Around campus, students are so encouraging to one another. I have not had a day pass where I have not had a friendly interaction with a complete stranger, and I find that this is a product of the academic environment that has been established. The same cannot be said for other campuses, such as Altoona, where I studied for one semester. I found that students there cared very little about how other students were doing, and the professors were there, merely to say the things they needed to say without actually teaching or supporting their students. In Mont Alto, every professor I have had has remembered my name. Dr. Beecher, who was my professor for a history class I took through dual enrollment, still stops me when he sees me around campus to ask how I’m doing— and I am an upcoming junior. Professors I have not taken classes with yet, but have had conversations about various things, always stop to say “Hi!”. This is the type of environment that yields success and promotes lifelong learning.

If nothing else, the proof is in the grades. My GPA for my semester in Altoona was a 2.25, from which I am still recovering. My Term GPAs from the two semesters I have spent in Mont Alto have been 3.65 and 3.87 respectively.

As administrators, I understand you have a duty to do what is best for the university as a whole, but understand that Mont Alto is not your typical satellite college campus. It is more than just a streamline to University Park— it is a thriving community where academic excellence is put above all else, and where students and professors come together to create valuable experiences.

Penn State Mont Alto is the most beautiful community I have gotten the pleasure to be a part of. I am proud to be a part of this flourishing campus. And as administrators, you should be proud to provide such a meaningful place to students.”

Kazim Hasan, Class of 2027, Mechanical & Nuclear Engineering

“When I first arrived at PSUMA, I was just a student with big dreams and very little direction. I didn’t know anyone, and I wasn’t sure if I truly belonged in such a rigorous academic environment. But that changed quickly. It was at PSUMA that I discovered who I really was—not just as a student, but as a leader, a teammate, and a resilient individual. From leading engineering projects and presenting at academic festivals, to serving in student government and building lifelong friendships, every experience shaped me in ways I never expected. The support I received from my professors, the late nights working on club projects, and the community that always believed in me—even when I doubted myself—transformed PSUMA into more than just a campus. It became the foundation of my personal and academic growth, and it will always be the place where I truly began to believe in my potential.”

Bryce Hissong, Class of 2026, Film Production

“My name is Bryce Hissong, and this is why Penn State Mont Alto has done so much for me, not just as a student but as a person as well. I grew up in rural Mercersburg, PA, and attended a high school where my graduating class was around 150 students. College was something that loomed over my shoulders as I knew I wanted to get into the film production field, having a passion for the creation of videos and storytelling. However, I knew that to get into that industry, it would potentially require moving far outside of an area like Mercersburg. Once I found out that Penn State had such a good film program, I knew there was no other place I wanted to go. Going from such a small high school to such a large college was going to be an extremely difficult challenge for me, and I don't know if I could have done it without my three semesters at Mont Alto before transferring up to State College.

Mont Alto allowed me to acclimate to college life while also growing more comfortable and confident as a person. It was definitely larger than my high school, but there were so many great groups of people that made me feel part of a real community. The billiards club and my time as the team manager for the men's basketball team allowed me to learn how to reach out and get involved with the things around me. This is something that helped me get involved with many clubs and organizations at State College.

My family has always been important to me, and Mont Alto allowed me to experience what it would be like to be away from them while still being close enough to go back home if I needed. Because the campus was relatively small, I felt like I could actually get to know all of my professors and build strong relationships with them. This is something that I can't say I have been able to accomplish while I am currently at Penn State. I learned how to become a better student because of this, and it has helped me achieve honors in almost every single semester of school.

If I hadn't gone to Mont Alto to learn and grow as a student and person, I might have been overwhelmed at a larger Penn State campus and given up on my passion. Today, I am an active member in several State College clubs and organizations, including CommAgency, 46 Live, PSNTV Nittany Talk, Delta Kappa Alpha, and most recently, the Penn State Hollywood Program. I have become so incredibly fortunate to have all of these clubs and organizations supporting me today.

A campus like Mont Alto is so effective for so many people who, like me, come from a small area and just need that little extra support to help them grow into the person they want to be. I ask that you please continue to let this beautiful campus be a place where students can pursue their passions while continuing to grow themselves.”

Logan Marsik, Class of 2026, Psychology

“My name is Logan Marsik, and I am the head academy coach of Rainbow Six Siege Team Abyss. Mont Alto has given me the understanding and experience in working with people from other cultures that allows me to be a head coach of players around the world. If Mont Alto were to be shut down, all you are doing is taking that experience away from other people that want to go to Penn State while not having enough money to go to Main Campus. My dad is also an alum of Penn State Mont Alto (Class of 2013, Information Technology, specialization in Cybersecurity). He is now the head security for technology in

Harrisburg. I do not believe that if he did not have the opportunity Mont Alto provided that he would have the same opportunities elsewhere.”

Ben Irr, Class of 2027, Business

“My name is Ben Irr and I’ll be entering my 3rd year in the fall, and I’m on the Men’s Golf team. Penn State Mont Alto has given me the opportunity to continue playing the sport I love, while pursuing my education at a top level university. In Highschool I was lost in the process of choosing a school to attend, but when I found out I could continue playing the sport I love and get a Penn state degree, it was a no brainer to choose Mont Alto. Along with the fact I could commute to school and live at home. I never was an excellent student In High-school, and wondered how I would succeed in college, but with the constant support of staff and my advisors and my professors, and coaches, I truly prospered in school for the first time ever, with the support here at Mont Alto . I owe everything to Mont Alto so far in my ability to pursue my academic and athletic career and continue to succeed”

Kassidy Nester, Class of 2028, Nursing

“Hello, my name is Kassidy Nester and not only am I a student at Penn State Mont Alto, but I am a Student-Athlete. I play softball at Mont Alto giving me the ability to do what I have dreamt of doing since I was 8 years old. I want to know if you have actually thought of the hundreds to thousands of Student-Athletes you've put in this position of not knowing what they're going to do. You are harming a dream we have had since we were little. Since we put our heart and our souls into it. I am not saying that we should be the only focus but we should be something. I am being presented the choices of graduating early, or transferring and either way I am losing a year of my athletic career because it’s already been stated that other campuses won’t take us. I want to have a Penn State degree without the stress of a larger campus while being able to do what I love. I enjoy the smaller number of students we have because that allows me to get the one on one that I need as a student with a disability. All of my professors and the other staff around me know me by name, by my sport, by all the little things about me. Our dining hall staff and RA’s have conversations with us and know who we are because of the small community. I love Penn State Mont Alto. It is my home and frankly I don’t know what I’d do without it. It’s given me the ability to have an academic and athletic career at the collegiate level with teammates who have my back no matter what, if I lose that it will be devastating. Please just listen to our voices and understand that this is a decision that will change our lives and possibly traumatize us. Each of us fuel University Park, and without our campuses you won’t have the amount of diversity you have. WE are Penn state, the heart of the university. Don't take that away. Please.

Thank you.”

Ryan Brown, Class of 2029, Incoming Student

“I don’t know what to say too much about Mont Alto since I haven’t been there yet, but just from seeing and researching Mont Alto is amazing. I can see how it’s a tight knit community. The place is a family where everyone works together. The campus is also historic and well managed. So my opinion may not

ALUMNI

Taylor Butcher-Benjamin, 2024 Graduate, Psychology

“My reason to keep it open: as someone who's a little older than most who go there, it was a huge part of my life. After Covid took its toll, I needed to find something better to occupy my time and take my life in a better direction. Getting my psychology degree and meeting so many new great people at Mont Alto was one of the most fascinating experiences I've ever had.”

Courtney Song, 2019 Graduate, Mathematics & Statistics

“Mont Alto was where my college career was born and where I was first molded into greatness. There I was provided invaluable professors, tutors, and resources in order to become a thriving honors student before going to University Park to complete my bachelor's degree in general mathematics with an application in statistics and a minor in statistics. I have since gone on to have a thriving career at a Fortune 100 company that I have been at for the past four out of the five years since my graduation from Penn State. That would not have been possible without the ongoing support of the professors and fellow students at Mont Alto, the wisdom, guidance, and recommendations they gave me helped drive my education and career and I can say without a doubt they have impacted my life for the better.

The people at Mont Alto truly care about every single person that steps onto that campus, from the students, to the staff, to the administrators. The sense of community at Mont Alto was unlike any I have ever seen in my lifetime, and I witnessed it every day that I was there. Staff constantly going above and beyond to create a good experience for the students and to foster a healthy and happy work environment for each other. We are a tight knit family at Mont Alto and no matter what happens that community will remain strong. Some of the best and brightest minds were ones that I met at Mont Alto and closing this campus would be a huge disservice to the Penn State institution as a whole. Mont Alto serves as a huge contributor to THON (especially for a branch campus of its size), engages in community building for the students and faculty, hosts events to bring the student body together, and so much more.

I implore you to please keep the doors of Mont Alto open so that future students can be empowered by the people there to become the best students and people they can be as they enter into adulthood. One's college years are some of the most formative years of their life and Mont Alto is such an incredible place for a coming of age as a student and as an adult. There is no other academic institution quite like it.”

Carlos Vera, 2020 Graduate

“I was a Mont Alto student from 2017-2018. That year built the foundation of my education and career. I owe a lot to Mont Alto and I implore you to allow future generations to have a similar opportunity.”

Rakshik, 2025 Graduate, Electrical Engineering

“I enjoyed Mont Alto's small campus size during my first 2 years of college. It was amazing to commute to campus during my first 2 years which helped me to transition to college life.”

Aleksandra M. Smith, 2025 Graduate, HDFS

“Since I was 13 years old, I’ve been a part of the Penn State community advocating for its values and the good it does for its community. When I was 13, I was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, and was treated by the Penn State medical community to cure my cancer. After that, I began my journey at Penn State Mont Alto, and as of May 9th, I became the graduating class of 2025 from Penn State Mont Alto finishing my degree in their honors program.

Aside from my journey, I wish to take this time to let you know how much the Penn State community has impacted me as not only a patient but a student. Through my academic journey at Mont Alto, I was blessed with a beautiful and welcoming community. Aside from the many memories I made from my social life, I also want to take this moment to let you know that out of my academic experience, the staff at Penn State Mont Alto have had the most significant impact on me. Through my four years of obtaining my degree, they were always there for me during my ups and downs. When concerns came up in regards to my academic performances, they were the first to reach out. When concerns even came up about how I have been doing regarding my well being, they have always been the first to reach out and ask what they can do to help. On top of caring about each individual student they meet at this campus, their teaching and lecturing skills were by far phenomenal. Comparing their teaching skills to my private highschool I attended before starting my college career, Penn State Mont Alto’s professors have exceeded the expectations and have helped me succeed more than I thought I would have done so.

Closing Penn State Mont Alto would have a catastrophic impact on the overall Penn State community. Through the professors, staff, and communities surrounding Mont Alto, we would lose opportunities, we would lose talents many at the campus have been blessed with, and we would lose the opportunity to give newer students the astonishing experience I received at the campus as well. I hope this message reaches you well, and in hopes would see a possible change in decisions and hearts. For many years to come, I hope to see Penn State Mont Alto continue to flourish, and the only way to do so would be to have our campus operations continue after the spring of 2027.”

Victoria L., 2025 Graduate, Anthropological Sciences

“Penn State Mont Alto had helped me pave my Penn State career and had helped me feel more comfortable being away from home. I had made lots of connections and friends during my two years there; it was also a close enough commute home so I was able to travel home and visit my family when I felt homesick.”

Brianna Barnes, 2023 Graduate, Business Management and Administration

“Growing up just five minutes from Penn State Mont Alto, I always knew that one day I wanted to be a part of that campus—and I’m so incredibly grateful that I did. Choosing Mont Alto was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. It gave me lifelong friends, incredible mentors, and countless memories that I will cherish forever.

Even as a commuter student, I never felt left out. What made Mont Alto so special was its strong sense of community and its constant encouragement for all students to get involved, regardless of where they lived. That welcoming spirit allowed me to fully participate in campus life, and it led me to one of the most meaningful experiences of my college journey—becoming involved in THON, one of Penn State’s most impactful organizations.

Mont Alto also gave me the foundation for a successful future. Thanks to the dedicated faculty and the quality education I received, I earned my degree in Business and have since built a fulfilling career in Marketing.

Penn State Mont Alto is more than just a campus—it’s a place that changes lives. It changed mine. Closing it would mean taking away opportunities, connections, and futures from students who, like me, found their path there. Please, help keep Mont Alto open for the generations to come.”

Hannah Mummert, 2004 Graduate, Nursing

“I wanted to take a moment to share what Penn State Mont Alto has done for me and the education that I received from there. I graduated from the ASN program in 2005. I wasn’t ready to leave home yet and having Mont Alto close by gave me the opportunity to get my degree all while commuting to and from class. After years of working and then deciding to continue my education, again Mont Alto allowed this opportunity for me to obtain my BSN in 2020. The excellence in the nursing program and what it stands for has given me so many possibilities in my nursing career. I continue to support Mont Alto and would encourage anyone to attend this campus while pursuing their dreams. Mont Alto is a beautiful campus with so many pathways for local students as well as those that stay on campus. Having a degree from Penn State Mont Alto is something I will always be proud of and also grateful for the chance to fulfill my career pathway with pride while I serve my community. I hope and highly encourage the leaders to take into consideration the huge impact Penn State Mont Alto has on the student body, the educators and the community.”

Topher, 2018 Graduate, Human Development and Family Studies

“To the Pennsylvania State University Board of Trustees, President Bendapudi, University Leadership and all involved in making this extremely difficult decision, my name is Christopher (Topher) Overdorff, PSU class of 2018 from the **Mont Alto** campus. It was at Penn State Mont Alto that I was able to explore my future as a higher education administrator. I recognize that with the birth rate drop, different educational and career routes, budget limitations, and the unknown status of higher education in the world, you are forced to make some very difficult decisions. *How do you realistically approach the future of our University while amputating the hands that bleed blue for you?*

My story is simple and one I have heard countless times at branch campuses, and now within the Maryland Community College system in which I am employed at Carroll Community College. I didn't want to go to Mont Alto. I wanted to attend University Park. I, like many, was driven and excited to be a Nittany Lion for as long as I can remember. In high school I was just below the GPA threshold to gain acceptance into University Park, so I signed up for the 2+2 program, hoping that when I transfer to UP I wouldn't have missed out on two years of my college experience by attending Mont Alto. Then things changed and I had my eyes opened wide by the true heartbeat of our college, the people. My many professors, staff mentors, café and grounds crew employees and friends are the people who put the *We* in *We Are*.

In my time at Mont Alto I was able to tap into the many leadership opportunities Mont Alto had to offer. I enrolled in the Human Development and Family Studies program, took leadership in our campus' THON organization, danced in THON, worked in the café, lived on campus 3 of my 4 years, participated in many leadership classes, became an orientation leader, started the Alternative Spring Break program, attended conferences, participated in the student government, and was awarded the Eric A and Josephine S Walker award. These many opportunities are what led me to enter the field of higher education and serve as the guiding factor for how I lead the classroom, club and student government skill building, and campus events. Through Mont Alto's guidance I have been able to be the domino that is striking many new young people for the first time. The chain of impact that Mont Alto has is felt so far and wide. I was honored to be able to spend more time at Mont Alto than I initially sought. Now as a higher education professional, my students come back after transferring to their 4 year school wishing they could have continued their education and earned a Bachelor's degree from Carroll Community College. These stories aren't solitary. Many people also say how much they wished they could have earned their degree from Mont Alto if it was offered there.

While a decision is inevitable, I do not envy you. All I ask is that when you are making the decision, that you consider all of the people like me, proud Penn State MONT ALTO alumni, who have been able to impact many lives in their own sphere and how we got our start at the beautiful campus of Penn State Mont Alto. I hope you consider all of the people who will be impacted by the decision, my friends who are still impacting the students at Penn State Mont Alto. I hope you keep in mind the single mothers with two adolescent children going back to school to finally finish the degree they started two decades ago, who without Mont Alto, wouldn't be able to complete her degree. While you receive this deluge of letters imploring you to keep their campus open, I hope this personal testimony is another drop in the bucket that proves the impact that our commonwealth campuses have on the alumni that exist as Penn State alumni. We are here, waiting and watching. Keep Penn State Mont Alto open.”

Alyssa Clever, 2019 Graduate, Criminology

“I am writing in support of the Penn State Mont Alto campus. I had the privilege of attending there from 2015 to 2017 before transferring to Penn State's Main Campus. I look back on my time at Mont Alto with fondness and nostalgia. Not only was Mont Alto a great community, but it also gave me a foundation for my time at Main Campus. From 1st grade to 12th, I was homeschooled. My first time stepping into a classroom was stepping foot into my first Penn State class. Of course, this was huge for me, but from the moment I started working with the Mont Alto staff/faculty, I knew I had found a wonderful place to begin my college career. From orientation to the first class, I was greeted with warmth and acceptance backed up by informative guidance. I never had to feel overwhelmed because I knew Professor Hawkins, Professor Herrmann, Professor Seitz, and so many others would be there, willing to help as much as they could. The next two years at Mont Alto prepared me for the Main Campus. I grew in confidence and academics, thanks to programs like on-campus tutoring, professors' office hours, and student study groups. I know my story is not unique because Mont Alto has been a haven for many others. I believe that it can continue to do so. Aside from my full-time job as a Magisterial District Judge's Administrative Assistant, I work with a local youth group. A lot of these teens are from rural areas and do not see themselves at a campus as big as Main. I often talk with them about higher education and how important it is. I specifically discuss Mont Alto because it is more accessible to them. It shows them that they can have an amazing education without having to leave their families and go to a big campus. Teens like these need places like Penn State Mont Alto that will give them opportunities they wouldn't have otherwise.

During my time at Mont Alto, I was a Lion Ambassador, which gave me insight into the special history of the campus. The campus is home to buildings like Wiestling Hall, the oldest of any buildings on the Penn State campuses. Conklin Hall, which has bricks that were laid by some of the campus's early students. It truly gives the campus a feeling of stability and connection. What a wonderful thing it is to be able to sit in buildings that have had students in them for around 122 years! This rich history is not overshadowed by the impressive new Allied Health building. However, these new additions show the ongoing interest in higher education for this area and the growth of the campus itself. In 2022, just two short years ago, \$13 million was put into the Allied Health building alone. The Fall 2024 enrollment was around 670, this is up almost 100 students from the previous year!

Mont Alto has had a long history with programs like Forestry and Nursing, which are major assets to our county and state. These programs bring in events such as forestry competition and skilled nurses for our local hospitals. Moreover, many places do not offer majors like Forestry. This is another special feature for Mont Alto and a drawing point for many incoming students.

As an alumnus, my relationship with Mont Alto has stayed strong. I am still in contact with processors and staff who have helped me with letters of recommendation and have been supportive of my life after graduation. They have also given me opportunities to come back to campus to do presentations and panels. I have attended many of the activities the campus has open to the public as a member of the community with family and friends. All of these reinforce the idea of Mont Alto being more than just a campus but a community and part of the local area.

As a 2nd generation Penn Stater, a Lion Ambassador, Parents Program Family Ambassador, and a member of the Penn State family, I am devastated that we will be losing any part of this special community. This is my small part in trying to help maintain our wonderful legacy.”

Tracy Bonebrake Miller, 1994 Graduate, Health Education

“I am Tracy Bonebrake Miller, a proud first-generation college graduate originally from Mont Alto, Pennsylvania. I currently reside in nearby Waynesboro, PA so in addition to the ties to Penn State Mont Alto that I’m about to explain, I’m also a community stakeholder. I earned my Bachelor of Science in Health Education and Master of Education degrees from The Pennsylvania State University. Throughout my academic journey, I studied at Mont Alto, University Park, and Harrisburg campuses. Currently, as part of my doctoral program at Concordia St. Paul, I am researching effective teaching strategies to increase the effective delivery of C.P.R. by laypeople.

The Mont Alto campus was instrumental in shaping my career. Initially uncertain about college—concerned about affordability, adapting to a large university, and navigating academic challenges—I found my confidence at Mont Alto. The personalized support and high-quality education provided by dedicated faculty and staff, many of whom continue to serve at Mont Alto, were pivotal in my success.

During my first year as a student at Mont Alto, I began working for the "JTPA Next Step" summer program hosted on the Mont Alto Campus. Next Step offered local high school students paid positions on campus, teaching them job skills and guaranteed them admission to Penn State upon high school graduation. Over eleven years, I progressed from Crew Leader to overseeing the \$100,000 grant, helping first-generation students become professionals in fields such as medicine, education, and engineering. This experience ignited my own passion for education, a field in which I have served my community for over 31 years.

Penn State is a family tradition. My son chose Penn State Mont Alto for its quality nursing program, affordability, and proximity to home. He graduated debt-free and now works as a pediatric RN in intermediate care. During his time at Mont Alto, he was among the first classes to utilize the new \$13 million Allied Health Building.

In addition to my role as a full-time high school teacher, I am an adjunct instructor at Penn State Mont Alto. I have taught exercise and sport activity courses and, more recently, Kinesiology courses, assisting students in obtaining First Aid and CPR/AED certifications essential for careers in forestry and allied health. In 2024, I received a General Education Mircogrant to purchase high-quality feedback manikins to prepare our forestry and allied health students with first aid and emergency care skills to go out in their respective fields.

I urge you to consider the profound impact that closing our campus would have on our community. Beyond the statistics and policies, our stories reflect the true value of Penn State Mont Alto. If "WE ARE" truly Penn State, we don’t eliminate an entire community. WE work together for a more favorable solution for all stakeholders.”

Sean Jones, 2015 Graduate, Agricultural Science

“My name is Sean Jones, former student at Mont Alto, Former employee of Penn State Brandywine and current World Campus Student. and Penn State Mont Alto has always been more than just a campus to me—it has been home. I first walked through its doors in 2011, returned in 2013, and even during my time away, I always knew I would come back. The friendships I forged here are timeless, and to this day, I am still connected to the incredible people I met during my freshman year. Mont Alto has always been a place of rich history, adventure, and unwavering camaraderie—a place where students come not just to earn a degree but to be part of something greater.

The campus events, the dedicated faculty and staff, and the ever-evolving environment made Mont Alto special. We watched the campus grow, embraced new opportunities, and built a culture of inclusion and warmth. Whether it was students proudly wearing their flannels and nursing scrubs, showing off the heart of our most popular majors, or me leading campus tours to make newcomers feel welcome, Mont Alto was built on connection, tradition, and the pursuit of excellence. That’s why it is heartbreaking to hear that this place home to so many—is facing closure, not because it failed, but because leadership at University Park failed us. The students, faculty, and staff of Mont Alto have never faltered; we have continued to thrive despite the challenges. If only those making these decisions had taken the time to truly understand what Mont Alto and other commonwealth campuses mean to the people who call them home.

The problem is not the students, not the faculty, not the campus itself; the problem lies in the lack of understanding, in the dismissal of the voices that have shaped these spaces. Higher-ups should be listening to the staff, faculty, and students, learning from them, and investing in their needs. If every campus were designed with its culture and community in mind, these spaces would flourish instead of being discarded. I have had the privilege of working at Brandywine for the last five years, supporting students through housing, food service, and club advising, helping them with their academics, and listening to their stories. And through it all, I told them about Mont Alto, the place that shaped me, the campus that built lifelong friendships, the space where memories were made. They were amazed at what Mont Alto had to offer, and they asked why more campuses weren’t given the opportunity to shine in the same way.

If Penn State truly wants students to stay at these campuses, then they must give them what they need to thrive. Make Mont Alto part of the College of Agriculture, expand the nursing programs, introduce more health majors and give students career paths they don’t have to relocate to complete. Invest in the faculty, in the part-time employees, in the students. Because these campuses deserve the same opportunities as any other.

This is what I wrote on the Penn state survey that went out back in February.

Penn state would be a better place if it did the following:

1. Make all commonwealth campuses different, meaning every campus should have its own identity to make it feel like it's a campus that's catering towards its community and people they are enrolling.

2. Let people be able to be more creative and able to speak out on what the campus needs to change without any backlash
3. Create a task force a group of people 2 from every campus and take time to travel to each campus spend time to see what the culture is from each one learn what works and what doesn't work.
4. Create workers scholarships for those going to school to earn a degree
5. Housing and food services should have a scholarship for student employees that they can apply for to help with school. (Departmental scholarships for student workers.)
6. Be more open-minded and learn how to get feedback and accountability without getting punished by the comments.
7. Be more transparent on how we communicate with faculty, staff and students on important details about the campus and overall university.
8. Work more with the community and build more trust within them
9. Utilize the staff members and skills they must see what skills they have to offer to students to keep their interest at the school.
10. Create more hands-on programs for campus, teach life skills, and have more 4 year programs at campuses or create more hands on workshops for students to develop more skills.
11. Make commonwealth campus more reasonable price treat it like community college pricing the more reasonable the schools are the more students will be enrolled.
12. Build community events, join in programs that showcase the schools, students and staff talents.

Mont Alto and every Penn State Commonwealth Campus hold the power to transform lives. But they cannot do it alone—they need leadership that believes in them, supports them, and fights for their survival.

I will always carry Mont Alto in my heart. It is more than a school, it is a home, a family, and a place of endless potential.

Let's fight for it. Let's stand for the students, the faculty, and the legacy that deserves to live on."

Chris William, 2014 Graduate

“To say that Penn State Mont Alto should be closed down is a terrible mistake to even begin to consider. For such a small campus it makes no sense why so much has been invested in it. From the renovations of the buildings (I.e: the new nursing building that was completed only a couple years ago and long after I graduated) to the forestry and nursing programs, the professors and administrative staff at Penn State Mont Alto not only foster an environment of great success but also they promote diversity, creativity and innovation, they make learning fun, they believe in us when most others would give up on us, and a myriad of other wonderful things. Again, for such a small campus, they seem to put a lot of effort into it and make it seem like it’s a larger campus instead. Maybe not like State College in terms of size, but in terms of what they put into the students there, they seem to get more for their buck as the saying goes.

When I was a freshman at Mont Alto in 2010, I had a vague idea of what I wanted to do in life but beyond my degree I was scared, had no clue, and I thought I was furthering my education for nothing. But as I got to know some of the professors more, met with some new friends, and even occasionally having lunch with administrators like Chancellor Gnage himself, I was mentored by people who didn’t see me as just another name and number, but rather they saw a young person with a desire to succeed and who needed the guidance necessary to succeed in his education and have the tools to graduate and find a career once I left the nest of Mont Alto. They were more than welcome to just see me as a student, but instead they took the time and effort (again, even the chancellor himself!) to go out of their way to ensure I got my education and then some. They were administrators, but they looked after me like a family would. And without Mont Alto, I would not be the person I am today.

Please do not close down Mont Alto as part of your campus closures. I know logistically it might seem logical to do so, but in my opinion, the values and experience I gained from my time here are so impactful that you cannot place a monetary value price tag on it. Please keep investing in Mont Alto. Please keep this campus open. Thank you for your consideration.”

Duane Luchaco, 1976 Graduate, Forestry

“Personally, for me Mont Alto was a long ways away from where I lived (NE Pa. Sayre , Pa to be exact). I graduated from Mont Alto in 1976. Upon hearing that they were talking about closing the campus I went thru a range of emotions. From Anger to Tears. My story was one where in 1970 my dad passed at the age of 50. I was 15 and my life was changed immediately... my fear was college was not in my future. That is until my mom looked into it and after I told her about Penn State and she looked at the cost and the money she would be getting thru Railroad retirement she said it could still be possible. So, I started searching for a course I might like. Being an Avid outdoorsman the 2 year forestry course at Mont Alto was my choice . After working for the Lehigh Valley Railroad for 1 year as the course was full by the time I applied ,I got accepted in 1973. The distance away from home was what I need to grow and mature. That campus could not have been a better place for me to go. After my 1st year in forestry I decided that the 2 year surveying course was a better fit so I changed my major and in 1976 I graduated. And while I did work as a surveyor for a number of years hooking up with a mapping company and traveling all around the country I ended up starting a different business in 1984 and to this day I still own my own little business .. and YES I owe it to the education , the friendships, with professors and fellow classmates and the memories I got while attending Mont Alto. Many of which I can recall like they are happening right now. I truly believe that those 3 years at that small campus made me who I am today. One that stands out happened in my very 1st year, we went up to Old Main and took in a football game .. can’t remember who we played but I do remember watching John Cappelletti run roughshod all over the field that day as we won big. The next day, myself and 3 other guys who came with me were walking one of the streets in town and ran head on into Coach Paterno. As we shyly all said hello , he stopped us and for the next 20 minutes he talked to us about how important it was to get a college education. He asked each of us where we grew up and the major we were studying , when he heard we were all in 2Fort Forestry he immediately new that we were attending Mont Alto , his response said it all , “ahhh Mont Alto, the crown jewel of our branch campuses “...so hearing the thoughts of the closure of that “Crown Jewel” is what brought my anger and my tears from a broken heart thinking no one else will ever receive such a great experience by attending there.”

Kellie Crawford, 1999 Graduate, BA Psychology, BA Administration of Justice, Minor Women's Studies

“Penn State Mont Alto holds a special place in my journey, serving as an important stepping stone before I transitioned to University Park. Its close-to-home convenience made it an ideal starting point for my continued education. For many local students, it offers a supportive environment to complete general education credits while easing into college life before moving to a larger campus. With programs well-suited to the campus, its presence is invaluable, and closing it would be a significant loss. Mont Alto is more than just a campus—it’s a home away from home and a strong foundation for those beginning their college journey.

Penn State Mont Alto was a critical bridge for me—it provided a smooth and supportive transition from an out-of-state college to University Park. The value of that opportunity cannot be overstated.

Now, as a parent, I want my daughter to have access to similar opportunities through her high school’s dual enrollment program. If Penn State Mont Alto closes, that door may be closed for her and so many others. That’s not fair.

The impact of closing Mont Alto would go beyond buildings—it would limit access, eliminate pathways to higher education for local students, and disrupt generations of families who rely on it as a stepping stone.

Please consider the long-term consequences. Mont Alto is more than a campus—it’s a lifeline.”

STAFF/FACULTY

Chance McClure, PSUMA Men's Part-Time Assistant Baseball Coach

“Mont Alto is necessary for the community and for the surrounding areas. Located near the DMV area we are pulling more and more from out of state and in state. Offering a cheaper education to kids that may not be able to necessarily afford to go to Main Campus and pay those bills. Graduating from Mont Alto and gaining so many friends and connections seeing this campus close would be a hardship to this community. Our athletics department has been gaining more and more success and as a baseball coach alone I know we have made more ground on getting enrollment up and interest in our campus.

Please do not close our school and ruin our community as a whole.”

Dr. Robin Yaure, Professor of Human Development & Family Studies

“My statement in support of Penn State Mont Alto is very difficult to draft given that I have been at the campus for over 35 years and I believe in its value with every part of my being. I have seen so many students come through the campus and have their lives changed and also change the lives of others. Many who struggled with personal and financial issues found purpose in their lives and were able to overcome these struggles as they developed long-term relationships with other students, faculty, and staff. From the people working in the Mill who build relationships to those in the library who make connections with community members and students to Student Affairs whose staff provides activities and support for students, to the faculty in and out of the classrooms providing academic and personal growth opportunities for students, Mont Alto community members have enriched lives for over a century. From forestry to nursing and psychology and human development and family studies, physical and occupational therapy and business as well as general education including philosophy, English, mathematics, we have provided strong foundations for our alumni to make our community strong and thriving. Shutting the campus down would have ripple effects in the surrounding community as local people lose their jobs and youth no longer have a Penn State connection in the area. Mont Alto is more than a sum of its individual parts and its loss would be immeasurable.”

Rachel Biesecker, Daughter of a Penn State Mont Alto employee

“So PSUMA isn't my home, but it is a big part of my life. My mom works there and it's a large part of our income. She loves the people who she works with there and loves getting to interact with the students and feel like she makes a difference in her life, even if it's just getting the funding to help send them to college and better their programs. Without Penn State I'm sure my mom will find another job but I'm not sure her experiences as a first generation college student who paved her own way would be as valued.”

Dr. Elizabeth T Hill, Associate Professor of Economics Emerita

“I taught at Mont Alto for 24 years. As a student at a Penn State Campus (1954) , I felt I was truly valued. When I came to Mont Alto, I was very pleased to find the same atmosphere for the students. Please do not deny them this important experience.”

Dr. Corrinne Caldwell, Former Chancellor, 1987-1996

“As a former Chancellor at Mont Alto 1987 - 1996 I will undoubtedly have a different perspective from most of your respondents. My years at Mont Alto were a time of considerable expansion of enrollment and curriculum. We doubled the enrollment, built new buildings and renovated old ones. The curriculum grew to include the first nursing program on a Commonwealth Campus. The campus also became much more integrated in the community with a very active Board. In turn I was asked to serve and lead community based activities. Chambersburg and Waynesboro residents worked together and took pride in their important part of PSU.

I am certain that these communities would feel a major loss if their campus was to be closed. Valuable locally available, and as in the case of forestry, unique programs would be lost. The health related curricula are preparing urgently needed professionals. Expensive facilities would be wastefully discarded. Lastly, Mont Alto was a special place, tucked into the base of South Mountain, creating a tight knit sense of community. Years later Mont Alto students look back not just sentimentally, on their time there, but gratefully because of the growth and maturing that Mont Alto's community provided.

I would be very pleased to provide any additional information. Thank you to all who are participating in this difficult decision.”

Dr. Bob Maurer, Retired Professor of Mathematics and Statistics

“I started teaching at Mont Alto in the Fall of 1963 when it first became a commonwealth campus. My intention was to stay for about three years and move on. Thirty eight years later I retired from Mont Alto in the Spring of 2000. That year the students honored me with the Martha Fisher Teaching Award. During twenty five of those years I was also the Campus Registrar. I had offices in five different buildings. I watched buildings being torn down and new ones built in their place. I also watched buildings being built where there were none before. I watched as programs were eliminated (surveying, drafting and design) and new programs added (Physical therapy, nursing, and occupational therapy). I was at Mont Alto for the beginning of the Forest Technology program, and the admission of the first female students. Mont Alto is the home of the oldest building in use by the University (Wiestling Hall) and one of the newest (the health sciences building, built after I retired.)

The three pluses I see for keeping Mont Alto open are:

1. It is the only campus with the Forest Technology Program. Where would you move it? Or would you close it too?
2. It has dorms and the required food service.
3. It has modern teaching facilities, including a brand new health sciences building. Is that just to be thrown away? How much did that building cost?

I'm sure the major part of the low enrollment problem is tuition. Fifteen miles South is Hagerstown Community College. The out-of-state tuition there is less than the in-state tuition at Mont Alto. Where

do you think a local student is going to go? Yes, Mont Alto is a great place, but when it comes to money, guess what!

Please consider keeping Mont Alto Campus open. I would hate to see the lion removed from its place on the road up the hill.”

Jessica Yanotta, Program Assistant, Health Sciences Program

“If not for Penn State Mont Alto, I would not have chosen Penn State. I have had the great privilege of being a part of the Mont Alto community twice as a non-traditional student ('15 and '25) and also as an employee. Throughout my time here, I have seen firsthand how this campus provides accessible, high-quality education to a diverse student body, many of whom might not have the opportunity to pursue higher education otherwise. The close-knit community fosters a supportive environment that encourages academic achievement, personal growth, and strong connections among students, faculty, and staff. I have been on Main Campus, and unfortunately this community does not exist to the same extent there.

I strongly urge the board to consider the profound impact that closing Mont Alto would have on students, families, and our community at large. One of my Mont Alto professors used to say, "Every problem has multiple solutions." Surely there are other options to solve the financial and enrollment challenges at Penn State's Commonwealth Campuses, beyond closing a campus that provides such a supportive environment for non-traditional students.”

Randall Hood, Head Volleyball Coach

“I have been a volleyball coach for 30 years. Most of my coaching jobs have been as a head coach at various levels anywhere from middle school to NCAA DIV 2. Each coaching situation has had its own unique challenges and rewards. I came to Mont Alto in 2017 when I was hired as the head women's volleyball coach. I am about to start my ninth season as head coach, and I can honestly say that I have never had a coaching job that I have enjoyed as much as this one. You are correct when you say that Mont Alto is a special place. I know that I have had an impact on the players in helping them to not only become better volleyball players, but also better people, and they have helped me become a better person as well. I set out to develop a culture of "team first, individual second" and I have seen this culture materialize here at Mont Alto! Because of that over the last 4 seasons, we were national runner up in 2021, conference and national champions in 2022, & 2023 and finished 4th in the nation in 2024. There is also a true camaraderie between all of the sports teams here at Mont Alto with the way they support each other. On the academic side there is great support from the faculty to the students, as well as the amazing support in the academic support center. Mont Alto is a tight knit community that supports each other and also knows who each other is! That is more than I can say for many of my other coaching jobs that I have had. I coached at another PSU Commonwealth campus that is not on the list for closure, and I can tell you that it had no comparison to the sense of community that is here at Mont Alto! This truly is a special place, and it would be a shame, and frankly, a crime for it to end up closing. By closing Mont Alto, it would not only take away the opportunity for the area students, but also all of the Maryland students as well to have access to a PSU education and an incredible overall fantastic college experience! Thank you.”

Katie Barlup, Adjunct Professor of Rhetoric and Composition

I teach Rhetoric and Composition as an adjunct lecturer in the English department at PSU Mont Alto. I proudly graduated from the campus in 2007, and I was delighted to have the opportunity to return to teach in 2023. I am adding my voice to those speaking up for the future of our cherished school and student community. We love our one-of-a-kind campus and want to see it reinvigorated, not closed.

Jessica Scharf, Penn State Libraries Employee

“My name is Jessica Scharf, and I am writing today not only as a proud Penn State alumna (University Park, Class of 2015), but also as a current full-time Penn State Libraries employee, part-time staff member at the Mont Alto campus. I urge you to vote against the proposed closure of this vital institution. My connection to Penn State runs deep as my parents met at University Park, and I followed in their footsteps as a student. Years later, while going through a divorce and raising my autistic son as a single parent, I made the difficult decision to return to graduate school to pursue a career as an archivist. I was incredibly fortunate to find a part-time opportunity at Mont Alto, working in the library, an ideal step toward applying my history degree and building a future aligned with my passions.

Despite the 45-minute commute, I accepted the position because I believed in the mission of Penn State and in the transformative power of education. What I didn’t expect was how deeply I would come to rely on, and appreciate, the Mont Alto community. The library staff and campus members welcomed me with empathy, flexibility, and unwavering support. They’ve stood by me as a student, a parent, and a professional. That kind of environment is rare, and it is irreplaceable.

Mont Alto is not just a campus; it is a cornerstone of the region. One particularly special aspect of the campus is its deep connection to local history. With roots as one of the first forestry schools in the nation, Mont Alto has preserved and honored its legacy through collections, displays, and community outreach. The library and campus grounds serve as living history, attracting local residents, especially elderly community members, who find meaning in revisiting the stories, photos, and records that document their own lives and heritage.

We regularly welcome older adults who stop by to read local newspapers, explore historical archives, or simply connect with the evolving story of their hometown. These interactions build bridges across generations and reinforce Mont Alto’s role as a vital community hub, not just an academic space. If this campus is closed, we don’t just lose a place of learning; we lose a connection to our shared past and a resource that brings pride and purpose to people well beyond the student body.

Advocating for Mont Alto is my way of expressing how deeply grateful I am to be part of this extraordinary place. I respectfully ask you to consider the human impact this decision will have, not only on students and staff like me, but on the entire region we serve. Please keep Mont Alto open.

Thank you for your time and consideration.”

Dr. Hawkins, Professor of Biology

“I started teaching at Penn State Mont Alto in 1992. As a faculty member, I have been privileged to help hundreds of students launch their education toward careers in health, scientific and agricultural fields, and many other directions. Education has changed tremendously over my career, but one aspect of the Mont Alto experience has not changed. Students enroll in small classes where they get personalized attention. I have the chance to engage and encourage students, not only while they are enrolled in a class with me, but for as long as they are attending Penn State Mont Alto. I truly treasure getting to know our wonderful students.”

Karen Bingaman, Maintenance Worker

“I’ve been employed at Penn State Mont Alto Campus for 10 years. Our daughter decided on attending the Mont Alto Campus in 2012 Majoring in Business Administration for a 4 year degree. She earned her bachelor's degree in 2016 and tragically passed away in 2017. We as her parents had a Memorial Scholarship Award in her name established in 2018 to help students with their tuition each semester. Helping students is what our daughter would have wanted us to do. We're all here for the students on a daily basis. The closure of the Mont Alto Campus would be a double hit for myself and family if this would occur. Arriving on this campus everyday isn't just a job too me. It means so much more. This beautiful campus has so much rich history. My hope is that the Board of Trustees hear our voices before making life changing decisions for many of us. Please come visit our campus before any final decisions are made. We would love to welcome each and every one of you.”

Bradley Kendall, Campus Facility Manager

“Mont Alto Campus is a prime example of what a Penn State commonwealth campus should be. It gives you a first class education in a small intimate setting. It provides an opportunity to meet a student where they are at in life. My story is a perfect example. I came to this campus first as an employee. I embraced the education mission of this campus and soon enrolled as a part time student. I was able to continue as an adult student over the next 11 years to obtain my BS in Business. The campus and its resources gave me the ability to flourish. They met me where I was in life and allowed me to succeed. I was a first generation student that would not have had the opportunities had it not been for the Mont Alto campus and many campuses across the Commonwealth of PA. I am proud to say my son is 2nd generation graduate of Mont Alto and I know the experiences and knowledge he developed as a student at Penn State Mont Alto will help him flourish and continue to be very successful in life.

I continue to be amazed at the history of this campus and its education mission. I am proud to say that for 22 years I have put my heart and soul into supporting Penn State Mont Alto’s mission as a current employee and former student. I urge the board to consider the campuses and the impact they have on local communities at large and look for other possible solutions than closing the campuses outright. Not every student is the same and having opportunities to meet the student where they are at in life is what makes the PSU land grant mission possible.”

Dr. Kim Herrmann, Associate Professor of Physics & Astronomy

“When I applied for faculty positions, I was aiming for a student centered campus, like my alma mater: Penn State Behrend. I expected to teach for a year or two and then reapply elsewhere when I accepted the position at Mont Alto because I thought I wanted to be at a campus with a Physics bachelor's program. Now 13 years later, I never reapplied anywhere because I found my home at Mont Alto. I love teaching the two semester and three semester sequences of introductory physics with subsets of the same students. I get to know my students and can tell them: I know we covered this content last semester! For many of us, working at Mont Alto is more than just a job: it's a *passion*. Mont Alto students are bright, polite, appreciative, and a joy to be around. It's my privilege to discuss physics and astronomy with them, sing with them, work with Honors students, and share star parties and planetarium shows. I'm well-known for my large collection of astronomy and physics shirts, but perhaps my favorite is one that says: YOU MATTER until you multiply yourself times the speed of light squared. Then YOU ENERGY. Of course I love to wear it whenever I discuss Einstein's famous equation: Energy equals mass times the speed of light squared. However, I think the more important part is the first bit because my students and everyone at Mont Alto *matter*. Please don't close this very special campus that has had such an impact on many people and should remain to impact many more.”

Dr. Anne M. Devney, EdD, RN Nursing Faculty

“Mont Alto campus is especially important for health care careers. In particular, the nursing students who graduate/graduated from this campus provide an essential source of RNs to surrounding area hospitals and agencies where there is a critical shortage. In addition, PTA & OTA graduates likewise are in demand. Loss of these programs will only exacerbate the situation leaving students only a choice of more expensive private schools to attend. I doubt these facts have been adequately addressed from the student & employer side.”

Dr. Carranda Barkdoll, DNP, RN, CRNP, Director for Undergraduate Nursing Education

“I am a Penn State Grad x's 3. 96', 01', and 17'. I started my nursing education at Mont Alto and continued to connect to MA. It was very difficult to travel to UP to complete my education, having the ability to attend MA to obtain a terminal degree was a benefit as I am the Director of the Nursing Program and work in the community as a nurse practitioner, so this would be difficult to manage if I had to travel. Both of my sons attended MA to start their college career which was great to have a Big Ten University in our backyard. I was the alumni president for 6 years at MA, so this allowed for the alumni connection. One significant event I remember is the start of the nursing program in 1993 allowing students to stay close to home. Healthcare is suffering all over the Nation and this would affect healthcare delivery in our surrounding communities. I am concerned about the “knee-jerk reaction of the President of the University

without having frank discussions about the impact in our service area. I have not seen feedback from local donors, healthcare facilities and healthcare providers and what their opinion is about the closures. We Are Not the Penn State I know. My hope is the BoT votes no to all the suggested closures.”

Dr. Denise K. Salters, Assistant Teaching Professor of Biobehavioral Health

“From the moment I stepped on Mont Alto’s campus for my on-site interview, I knew it was exactly where I wanted to be. I have had the pleasure of teaching here for the last three years, and I could not have asked for a better community to help me grow as an educator, mentor, colleague, and person. There’s something so special about Mont Alto that you won’t understand from a quantitative report; you have to experience it yourself or conduct a qualitative analysis to capture its uniqueness truly.

“A hidden gem” is how Mont Alto was described to me by Dr. Mike Doncheski three years ago when I debated where to accept a position. He wasn’t exaggerating at all. The students on the campus are kind-hearted and eager to learn, and all have reasons why they chose Mont Alto over other universities. The students want to better themselves, dedicate their time to their studies, work to provide for themselves or their families, and are involved with clubs or sports on campus.

Forty-one percent of our student body proudly identify as first-generation college students. This vibrant and determined group exemplifies resilience, ambition, and a deep commitment to personal and academic growth. Despite their unique challenges, these students consistently strive for more while pushing boundaries, breaking barriers, and setting new standards for success. Their drive not only enriches our campus community but also serves as an inspiring testament to the transformative power that our faculty and staff have. I can’t begin to describe how students’ eyes light up when I share that I am a first-generation graduate and want to work with them to see them succeed and achieve their dreams of being the first in their family to attain a degree.

I’m not alone in my belief in them. My colleagues pour into students daily. We are not *only* faculty members but academic advisors, mentors, confidants, and cheerleaders. The days are long, and the demands are high, but one thing that never falters is the spirit we have with the opportunity to connect to students on a deeper level.

Our community is tight-knit, and our personal approach sets us apart. Students don’t receive generic feedback or automated email replies. I say this matter-of-factly because, teaching on the DLC, students from other campuses often comment on how speedy my replies are or how individualized my critiques are. It often makes me wonder how things are run at their home campuses, but still, I welcome them and treat them with the same courtesy I do for “our” students. Students can easily find their faculty during common hour, eating lunch amongst them in The Mill, on the Quad supporting fairs, inside the student center, engaging in open-panel discussions, or walking around campus before teaching afternoon classes.

It may sound cliché, but Mont Alto is a place where everybody knows who you are. At our campus, you’re never just a number; more importantly, we value your presence. We foster genuine relationships where students, faculty, and staff take the time to know and support one another. This year, I suffered the loss of a family member, and the amount of sympathy cards, emails, and hugs I received from colleagues and students was unimaginable. But that’s Mont Alto. That’s *our* campus. Unlike larger institutions (which I have taught at, including University Park), our campus creates an environment where meaningful connections happen; naturally, voices are heard, and every individual truly matters.

We can't lose our hidden gem, and it simply cannot be relocated elsewhere. Even considering closing Mont Alto would be a devastating disservice to our students, faculty, staff, and nearby community. I implore the Board of Trustees to carefully reconsider their decision and even visit our campus and see for themselves what an asset we are to the Penn State University Commonwealth Campus System.”

Dr. Renee Borrromeo, Physical Therapist Assistant Faculty

“I have been a faculty member in the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program at Penn State Mont Alto since 1993. I’ve been an Instructor, Senior Instructor, Associate Teaching Professor, Teaching Professor, Program Coordinator and Professor-in-Charge of the program. I served on the University Faculty Senate and I have participated in faculty governance and committee work at all levels. I have seen many changes in the program, campus, and university. Until recently, I have felt valued and I have felt that the PTA Program and its students and graduates were valued.

I know decisions about campus closures are being made on a cost-analysis basis (although I have yet to see compelling evidence that the plan to close campuses will result in a meaningful reduction in costs and increase in revenue), and I understand that the economic stability of the university is important. I also understand and appreciate the great contributions Penn State Mont Alto and its faculty and staff have made to the rural residents of south-central Pennsylvania and northern Maryland. I have seen almost one thousand students graduate from the PTA program and become gainfully employed in local hospitals and physical therapy clinics. I have heard employers specifically ask for Penn State Mont Alto PTA graduates because they are so pleased with their performance in the clinic. I have seen students grow from inexperienced 18-year-olds and mature into 21-year-olds, who have the confidence to lead patients through challenging, life-changing situations. I have seen single parents succeed in creating a new life for themselves and their families through second careers as PTAs. I’ve seen first-generation college students learn to navigate academic and professional situations with the assistance of the faculty and staff at the small Mont Alto campus.

The students I have worked with chose the Mont Alto campus because it was close to home and has a welcoming and supportive reputation. The students I have worked with did not apply to other Penn State campuses and would have probably not gone to college if it weren’t for Penn State Mont Alto. By closing the Mont Alto campus and many of the other small Penn State campuses, the potential students in the rural pockets of Penn State will be lost. Many of these students need to stay local because of family or work obligations, and many are interested in 2-year degrees. I have polled the PTA students every year, and consistently 90% of our students say they chose Penn State Mont Alto because of the PTA program. Although I have not polled students in Occupational Therapy, Nursing, or Forestry, I would imagine their numbers are quite similar. These students will not attend other Penn State campuses. They will find work in local businesses and will not have the opportunity to pursue a college degree or create a professional career. Closing the Mont Alto campus will disproportionately affect rural Pennsylvanians, contradicting Penn State’s land-grant mission.

I am proud of the work I have done at Penn State Mont Alto. I am proud of the graduates of the PTA students. I know I have made a difference and I know this campus has made a difference. When deciding how to vote on the decision to close Penn State campuses, please consider the rural Pennsylvanians and the many potential workers (health care workers especially) who will not have the opportunity to study at a Penn State campus.”

Darlene Giasomo, Food Service Production, Teamsters Union Steward

“Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

I respectfully urge you to reconsider the decision to close the Mont Alto campus. While I understand that financial data and enrollment numbers have played a role in this recommendation, I believe there are essential factors—human, educational, and community-related—that deserve greater consideration.

Mont Alto serves as a vital lifeline for our local community. High school students benefit from early college programs right here at home. Adult learners—including working parents and individuals already in the workforce—depend on the accessibility of Mont Alto to pursue their education while balancing jobs and family responsibilities. If this campus were to close, many of these students would lose their only realistic opportunity to earn a degree.

The Mont Alto campus is also deeply embedded in the local economy. We have strong partnerships with local organizations, including WellSpan Health (Chambersburg and Waynesboro Hospitals) and Bartlett Tree Experts, among others. These businesses rely on our graduates and have a vested interest in seeing the campus remain open and thriving.

Our academic programs are not only respected—they are necessary. The forestry program has a long history of excellence, and many students hope for the return of a four-year option at Mont Alto. Our nursing, occupational therapy, and physical therapy programs are critical pipelines for urgently needed healthcare workers in our region. At a time when the healthcare system is stretched thin, closing a campus that directly supports it seems counterproductive.

Mont Alto may be a small campus, but its impact is anything but small. Here, students aren’t just numbers on a spreadsheet—they are known, supported, and given the tools to succeed. Faculty and staff form close connections with students, and the friendships and networks built here often last a lifetime. This kind of community cannot be replicated elsewhere.

Please see beyond the data and recognize the heart of what Mont Alto provides: access, opportunity, and belonging.

We are IMPORTANT.

We are NECESSARY.

We are WORTH SAVING.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration.”

Jessica Green, Food Service Production Worker

“What Penn State Mont Alto did for me: it created a family. I work in the Mill and the students love seeing us as much as we love seeing them. We deserve to stay open. We grow with new students each year. On top of that, our community itself is growing. This campus is loved by so many.”

Stephanie, Maintenance Worker

“I have worked on this campus for 15 years. Mostly in HFS. Admissions years ago got PSU to give in-state tuition to MD and WV; I am not mistaken. Good point for our local community.

We have Residents Halls not filled to capacity, but they are occupied compared to other campuses on the list.

Our campus provides a resource of income to the local Mont Alto/ Quincy especially the Borough.

The students, the heart of this campus. These students enroll in this campus because they can thrive in a smaller classroom size. Not every student learns the same way. A majority of these students hold jobs back home to keep their summer job or help provide for their families. They like the flexibility and short commute home including MD and WV. We used to have a RA that commuted back and forth to MD to keep her job while attending to her RA duties. Impressive.

Unless I have been informed incorrectly, besides Main Campus, we are the only other campus that offers a Forestry degree. This is the campus's history.

We receive land-grant missions from local businesses and endowments for this Program. Possibly the nursing Program. Wellspan in our local Chambersburg community is in need of nurses. Our local Professional Tree Service companies are well known up and down the East Coast.

I understand the business aspect of it, but the board needs to think beyond just the money. It's our students on this campus and their families; for some families this could be the first family member to attend college. I understand the convenience of transportation and the city life of Harrisburg and Brandywine/Abbingtown. Our campus was at max capacity until those two campuses were built. In the end I stress that not every student learns the same nor can afford the cost of living/traveling in or to the city.”

Sophia McCleaf, Advising Manager, 2012 Alumna

Mont Alto holds a very special place in my heart. I am an alum and a staff member of Penn State Mont Alto. I was a non-traditional student in the sense that I didn't start and end at the same campus. I first started at York College then went to Penn State Mont Alto and bounced over to Shippensburg University. I ultimately came back to Penn State Mont Alto because it felt like home to me. The faculty, staff, and students are caring, brilliant, and one of a kind. I felt respected and not judged for not knowing my major path right away. They treated me as a person not a number. When I decided to finish my degree at Penn State Mont Alto, I was pregnant at the time and never once did any of my faculty members make me feel that a Penn State degree was out of reach for me. They supported me along the way, and I even received a scholarship. I loved Penn State Mont Alto so much that I decided to do my graduate internship through the Advising Office and worked my way up from a part-time adviser to a full-time adviser then eventually to my current role as Advising Manager. Everyday that I work with students at Penn State Mont Alto I see the connection they also feel with the campus. I see the hope in their eyes that they will become a Penn State college graduate. We (Mont Alto) are making a Penn State degree affordable and attainable to so many students who would not be given this opportunity if our campus did not exist.

Kelly Lesher, Academic Adviser, Advising Office

“What does Penn State Mont Alto specifically mean to me? My first interaction with Penn State was as a young child attending a football game. WE WERE not wealthy. We sat on the very top row, it was windy, cold, but the stadium excitement was unmatched. To eight-year-old me, it seemed like a great place to be. Throughout my adolescence college was never impressed on me by my parents, it was not even something I had considered. WE WERE a blue collared family, and I thought my destiny was to find a job that maybe I could stand and do that for the rest of my life. On came the various different jobs I had, after working and taking a gap semester after high school, I decided I should go to college. I applied to Penn State Mont Alto and subsequently, was rejected - I was advised by the admissions department that I did not have what it took to pursue a degree at Penn State, I should try to go to a community college first and then maybe they would consider me. Once again, since college had never been on my radar I floundered with the potential majors or careers I should pursue. My parents never impressed upon me that this is something that I should have been considering, nor did my high school.

I performed decently at community college. After two and a half years, I did not choose to apply to Penn State Mont Alto again and decided to join a friend at a college 45 minutes away from home. Unfortunately, success was not the outcome. I did horribly, the transition of leaving my home and my parents was not one that went well for me. I had no idea who my Academic Adviser was, let alone any type of resources that were available to me during this transition. Ultimately, I came home, found a full-time job, and ended up engaged and married within two years. College, at this point in my mind, was a distant memory and not an achievable goal.

Two amazing beautiful children later, a divorce now completed and a few dead-end jobs that left me frustrated and irritated as I knew I had potential to be and do better. I once again applied to Penn State Mont Alto and to my surprise I was accepted! Please note that I do not refer to Penn State as a whole as this was not a privilege I had, my children were 10 & 11 years old, due to 50/50 custody and the agreement that my ex-husband and I made, I was unable to move to a different location nor would I have uprooted my entire life/children to be selfish and satisfy my own needs. Being accepted to Penn State MONT ALTO was my lifeline, my second chance to make a difference in this world and prove more to myself and my children that it is never too late. I resigned from my full-time position and started to attend Penn State Mont Alto full-time, in person, with the majority of students almost 20 years younger than myself, working towards a bachelors in Human Development and Family Studies. I had been fortunate to receive state and federal grants, but I did not earn any scholarships, nor did I qualify for any work study positions. The first two semesters were not a financially great time for my family, but I knew I could improve our situation being a single mother, if I just kept going.

In my adolescence, I was never the scholarly type, once again, my parents only cared about my grades if I brought home a failing one, so there was no reason to excel. The first semester at Penn State Mont Alto I made the Dean's List and every subsequent semester thereafter. Proud, accomplished and satisfied for the decision I had made to go back to college, I knew I made the right choice. Walking onto the Mont Alto campus felt like 'home' to me, I belonged to something greater than myself. Challenged daily by my amazing professors who cared more about me as a student and person, I was not just a number to them (as in my previous college experiences) the staff and faculty care about their students. At that time some travelled for more than 90 minutes to get to campus to perform their duties. The Faculty here WANTS to

be here, to have that type of dedication and commitment was evident. At that time of my attendance, campus was bustling and flourishing. In my time here I was inducted into two honor societies, Alpha Sigma Lambda and Phi Kappa Phi. I earned the Human Development and Family Studies Baccalaureate Degree Award in 2018. In the Spring of 2018, I graduated with the distinction of Cum Laude and earned my Bachelors degree.

Not only am I an Alumna, for the past year and half I have had the pleasure of working with the wonderful students here at Penn State Mont Alto as an Academic Adviser. This is more than just a job to me, I am finally able to help others in ways that are beneficial to them. My first day back on campus as a Staff member once again felt like 'home'. As soon as I drove up the lane of this historic campus I breathed a sigh of satisfaction. I have the opportunity to now work with those same faculty and staff members that I grew to know and love as a student. Working with the students on this campus is a privilege and honor. Some students are not able to go to a campus further away than Mont Alto, sometimes it is just not feasible. Some students do not like the idea of a large campus, anxiety has to be addressed, their mental health needs to be considered. Removal/closures of the commonwealth campuses is going to be one of the most detrimental things that could happen to the Penn State brand and their surrounding communities. It is proven that the executive administration only cares about the almighty worthless dollar. Forget the land-grant commitments we have made to the state of Pennsylvania, gone is the 'access to all' we have made to the citizens of this state. Not everyone will have access any longer, our students are going to be forced to choose a different school.

Thinking to the all familiar tagline "WE ARE PENN STATE," "WE ARE ONE," sadly, that apparently is echoing to be the most untrue statement that has been said in the halls, buildings and campuses of the Penn State University. "WE ARE PENN STATE" only if we are flourishing and growing, which WE ARE but that still is not enough, Penn State Executive administration does not care about the people, students, staff and faculty, it is all about the money and bottom-line numbers. Budgets were cut, now activities cannot be as exciting or engaging as they once were. Tell me why a student would want to come here without an enjoyable college/campus experience. Campus experience and life are what keep students active, motivated and excited.

As all things are blamed on the Covid pandemic, I do have to believe that we are still to this day feeling those aftereffects. Unfortunately, we lack any type of support from the Executive Administration as has been proven by the most recent semester. Instead, Executive Administration has created a sense of fear, uncertainty, lack of transparency, trust and accountability. It is really ironic that one of the main people tasked with making the recommendation of which campuses close, will be leaving the University for another college, that is the most underhanded and despicable things I have heard, yet alone once the President makes her recommendation I am sure she will be gone soon after (she has already been applying for positions elsewhere), although if I would administration at another University, I would fear bringing her in, considering the pile of rubble and ruins she is leaving Penn State.

Proud of my accomplishments and extremely grateful for the opportunity to meet, learn from and work with the great people that I do, I am no longer proud to be a Penn State Alumna, I am ecstatic to complete my master's degree and call that University my Alma Mater.

Penn State used to be "WE ARE" but honestly, it should be changed to "WE WERE". No longer will I 'bleed blue and white' or boast of my attendance at Penn State, known as a high achieving and excellent

university. As the higher education place that I thought Penn State was, is surely not what it is. I will however be proud of my accomplishments that I did on my own, with the encouragement of some wonderful faculty and staff. I know this would not have been the case had I attended a different campus.”

Dr. Nikolette Lipsey, Professor of Psychology

“When I heard the news that Penn State Mont Alto was being proposed for closure, I was absolutely stunned. From the heart, I couldn't imagine setting foot on our campus and deciding it wasn't worth keeping. I couldn't imagine talking to our students, to our faculty, and to our staff and deciding they weren't valuable. Our campus is both steeped in history and paving the way forward for an innovative future. I know every campus has a story, and I strongly believe each and every Commonwealth Campus deserves a place at the table to continue fulfilling the Land-Grant mission. However, Mont Alto has unique strengths that make it an **asset**, not a burden, to the Penn State collective. The list is long and goes far beyond what I am able to express, but here are some important highlights:

1. Mont Alto has the **only** forestry program in the entire Penn State Commonwealth- a program that is uniquely situated on our campus in large part because of our historic arboretum containing over 100 different species of trees, and over 1,000 trees in total. This is not a program that can be easily moved or replaced.
2. Mont Alto also has a thriving Allied Health system - with nursing, PTA, and OTA all attracting incredible students who strive to better their communities in every way. These programs too cannot easily be moved, as they benefit not only from a newly constructed approximately \$14-17 million-dollar state-of-the-art Allied Health building, but also from decades-long partnerships with the health organizations in the community.
3. We have a thriving athletics program drawing in students from around the state and the country. In recent years alone, several of our teams, including Basketball, Volleyball, Baseball, Soccer, Softball, and Golf have either won championships or made it to the finals. It is not just that we have teams, it is that these teams are strong, and they recruit individuals who would not otherwise have considered Penn State. These programs cannot be replaced and they offer a student experience that is unique and valuable.
4. Our psychology and HDFS departments, of which I am proudly a part of, have cultivated a strong network of graduates who are now therapists, social workers, educators, Ph.D. Students, and a whole host of other professions that work tirelessly to better our communities. Yes, there are other campuses that have these programs, but we have built a tight-knit network that has many strengths that complement the existing programs on campus.
5. From a numbers perspective, Mont Alto is strong. Of the 12 campuses originally considered for closure, Mont Alto has the 4th highest enrollment. Of the 7 proposed for closure, our campus has the 2nd highest enrollment. These numbers are a testament to the fact that students find value in our campus specifically.
6. Mont Alto also has high-quality dorms, something that should not be overlooked. We attract students from not just Franklin County, but from a wider zone including many different states and

several different countries, in part because we can offer housing opportunities in addition to the high-quality education and experiences. Of the 7 campuses being proposed for closure, Mont Alto is the only one on that list that has on-campus student housing - a factor that has clearly been protective of the campuses remaining open or proposed to remain open.

7. In terms of proximity to other campuses, closing Mont Alto would leave a huge gap in South Central PA. The only campus remotely close to ours is Harrisburg, which is still approximately 75 minutes away. Many students are not able to travel that distance. Closing our campus would mean leaving a great number of students, faculty, and staff in a state of limbo that cannot easily be resolved by forcing them into online learning. Our campus is in a unique position. If looking at other campuses as an example, of the 7 campuses proposed for closure, each of them have an under 60-minute proximity to a campus proposed to remain open - except for Mont Alto and DuBois. For example - Shenango is approximately 55 minutes from Beaver. New Kensington is approximately 40 minutes from Greater Allegheny. Fayette is approximately 55 minutes from Greater Allegheny. Wilkes-Barre is approximately 40 minutes from both Scranton and Hazelton. York is approximately 40 minutes from Harrisburg. It seems deeply unfair to place Mont Alto in this higher level of burden, especially since our campus has stronger enrollment numbers and has dorms.
8. Our community and lawmakers have rallied behind us - as evidenced by statements from State Representative Chad Reichard ([statement link](#)) and Waynesboro Borough ([statement link](#)). Closing Mont Alto would wreak havoc on the local economy and local communities - putting an irreversible stain on the Penn State legacy.

From a personal perspective, the time that I have spent here as a faculty member has changed my life. I ache for our students, many of whom have shared with me that they have no interest in being anywhere but here. Many of whom are first generation students who through our small class sizes and personalized education have thrived in ways that would not be. When I heard the news that Penn State Mont Alto was being proposed for closure, I was absolutely stunned. From the heart, I couldn't imagine setting foot on our campus and deciding it wasn't worth keeping. I couldn't imagine talking to our students, to our faculty, and to our staff and deciding they weren't valuable. Our campus is both steeped in history and paving the way forward for an innovative future. I know every campus has a story, and I strongly believe each and every Commonwealth Campus deserves a place at the table to continue fulfilling the Land-Grant mission. However, Mont Alto has unique strengths that make it an asset, not a burden, to the Penn State collective. The list is long and goes far beyond what I am able to express, but here are some important highlights:

So, to those who are making this decision, I ask only that you consider this: What legacy does Penn State wish to leave? Is Penn State a university that callously casts aside hundreds and thousands of its community members, or is Penn State a university that works creatively and compassionately to allow its communities to thrive? Please do not let "WE ARE" become "WE ARE NOT." Penn State is a place where WE ARE all important threads in the fabric of a rich tapestry - and pulling out Mont Alto's threads from that tapestry will create frays that can never be repaired.possible elsewhere. I came to Mont Alto because it was exactly what I was looking for. A place where professors can actually get to know their students at a human level. A campus that is beautiful and feels like home. Colleagues who care just as

much about our campus and our students as I do - and who work tirelessly to give students the best possible experience.”

Alex Storm, Lecturer of Forestry

“I am a Penn State Alumnus, Penn State Faculty Member, staunch Penn State supporter and friend. My family is a Penn State Family. My great grandfather was a resident and agricultural leader in Centre County for his entire life. His farm, what is known as the Dreibelbis Farm in tax records, eventually became part of what is now the Blue Course. As a child I regularly visited his home on West College Avenue and from a young age I knew I would be a part of Penn State in my future.

My collegiate path did not start at University Park. I was not a particularly motivated high school student, and due to my interest in Forestry as a career path, I chose to attend the Mont Alto campus. That decision turned out to be the most impactful, positive and long-lasting choice that I have made in my life. At Mont Alto I found myself in an environment where I could thrive, not only as a student, but also as part of campus life. Thanks to wonderful faculty, mentors and staff I quickly became a regular Dean’s List student, and a positive presence on the campus. The mentoring I received at this campus shifted my life’s trajectory in a direction that highlights the power of the Penn State system.

My time at Penn State was not easy. I lost my mother to cancer on the Monday morning of finals in my final semester at Mont Alto. My professors not only showed me grace in this time of immense hardship, but they also gave me the support I needed and connected me with campus professional counselors, to keep me from spiraling emotionally. Without those faculty members who had gotten to know me as a person, and cared deeply about my future, I would not be in the position I am today. I was a Pell Grant Recipient at Penn State, a student employee and teaching assistant, and the first male in my lineage to attend college. The power of my experiences led me to pursue Accademia as a profession, with the hope to be able to support students in their academic journey, as I was supported in my times of greatest need.

Ten years after starting at Mont Alto as a student, in the fall of 2022, I returned as a faculty member, taking the place of my mentor to lead the Forest Technology Program towards the future. I am now the program coordinator for this prestigious and highly reputable academic program. In my time at Mont Alto, I have led my students and our program through unprecedented challenges both stemming from the lasting effects of COVID and the continued budgetary cuts from the current administration. Through those challenges I have experienced wonderful success working with Alumni, Stakeholders, and Industry Partners that care deeply about the future of this campus and program.

I led a reunion in the fall of 2023 to celebrate the 120th year of Penn State Mont Alto, an event that brought together over 200 friends of the campus and Alumni, which represented 7 decades of graduates that attended the campus as Forestry students. This event led to an endowment that was created to support a club on campus, the Penn State Mont Alto Woodsmen’s team, which was featured in the President’s Roundup on Philanthropy for the 2023-2024 Academic year. In the fall of 2024, I launched a research project with faculty at University Park to give students at Mont Alto the chance to start meaningful Undergraduate Research, that they could then continue at University Park. Beyond the academic benefits, this model of research collaboration serves to help students in their transition from a commonwealth campus to UP, ultimately giving them a network of faculty and graduate students that will support them in

their journey at Penn State. The full details of this endeavor were published in Penn State Today this winter. This is the Penn State that I signed up to work for and had planned to commit my professional life to!

I found out of the news that Mont Alto was being reviewed for closure after returning from a 4-hour field lab with my students. Since that moment I have spent countless hours writing letters, engaging with stakeholders, and advocating for this campus. This has taken my time away from my primary responsibility, my students. I am a Penn State faculty member for the students at Mont Alto. In my second year at Penn State, I was awarded our campus's faculty award for teaching excellence, and for Club Advising. My commitment to my students is what I hold dearest as a professional, and the choices of the Administration this spring have directly impacted my ability to focus on those students. I have been left with months of ominous fear that I would lose not only my present and future career, but also my past, where "Thou didst mold" me. This is NOT the Penn State that I have known for my entire life nor the Penn State that I signed up to work for.

The obvious bias presented in the recommendations to close Mont Alto is startling. The forestry program and campus cannot be effectively separated, nor is it reasonable to expect the program will survive without the resources accumulated on campus over 120 years (as has been suggested). The history of the forestry program is intrinsically intertwined with the campus, and I (as an alum) would not expect a fraction of the philanthropic support that we have historically received if the campus were to close and the program were to be moved.

We cannot abandon our history for shortsighted fiscal goals. Penn State's greatest asset is its people and the people that have and continue to support our mission. The choice to close these 7 campuses is to abandon those people, the disadvantaged people of the Commonwealth, and all future students who may need the support of a small campus to achieve their fullest academic success.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions about my program, our students, or our campus. Thank you for representing Penn State honorably in this time of great challenge."

Darlene Pasi, Mental Health Counselor

"I have had the honor for the past 18 years, to witness students grow beyond the challenges that exist for them in attending and succeeding in higher education. I have worked at other local universities, two of which are Wilson College, and Shippensburg University. But Mont Alto has something special in the support and guidance that it provides to students. I encourage you to visit and see Mont Alto before you close its doors. I think you will notice how important Mont Alto is to the first-generational student, who will be limited in their abilities to attend another campus or institution. For many of them, Mont Alto is a dream and a chance to build a better future for themselves and their communities. Many of these students stay in the surrounding areas, contributing to the local economic ecosystem. I ask you to see the forest through the trees and focus on how this closure will set a precedent for how land-grant institutions balance mission and money."

Athletics Testimony

Coach Staci Brennan, Director of Athletics:

- *Our teams have posted a cumulative GPA of a 3.00 or higher for the past 16 semesters*
- *Mont Alto placed 3rd in the USCAA President's Cup in 2023 (President's Cup is awarded based on academic achievement-overall GPA for athletic department, top 5 programs (teams) GPA and total number of National All-Academic winners (to qualify for USCAA All-Academic student-athletes need to have completed at least 24 credits and have at least a 3.50 cumulative GPA)*
- *Since 2016 we've won 14 PSUAC championships (3 this past year and three teams finished second)*
- *Teams consistently compete in USCAA championships, since 2016 Mont Alto has made 30+ appearances in National championships winning 2 USCAA team titles (2022, 2023) and 1 individual NCWA (National Collegiate Wrestling Association) title in 2022*
- *Mont Alto has finished first in the PSUAC Chancellor's Cup the past 2 years (The Cup awards points to campuses based on their finish in PSUAC sponsored sports)*
- *Our student-athletes make up approximately 22% of the student body*
- *Throughout the year teams participate in community service activities (Chambersburg IceFest, Mont Alto Day of Service), raise money for THON*
- *All facilities (gymnasium, soccer field, softball field, and baseball field) are on campus, our home golf course is 2 miles away from campus*

Mont Alto Families

Leon Bond III, Firefighter/EMT, Mont Alto Vol Fire Dept

“My family are residents of Mont Alto and I'm also a volunteer Firefighter & EMT with the Mont Alto Vol Fire Dept. We have used the campus for department training (Penn Gate when it was being torn down) along with walk-throughs for younger firefighters to learn structure layouts and initial operations setup. The loss of the campus also eliminates the annual training we do with the mock emergency drill. We really hoped it would not be on the list due to the Forestry history and new Nursing program/building.”

Final Note to the Board of Trustees

If you've made it this far, if you've taken the time to read through these stories, voices, and lived experiences, I thank you immeasurably.

Every voice in this document represents more than just sentiment. It represents impact. It represents the kind of community Mont Alto has cultivated, one built on opportunity, resilience, and connection.

We understand that metrics matter. That KPIs matter. That finances matter. But in a world where most decisions are dictated by numbers, let this be the moment Penn State stands out.

Penn State has long been a symbol of excellence in education, not just because of its resources, but because of its people. Let's continue to prove that a strong community holds value beyond what can be measured on a spreadsheet.

We are Penn State, the largest alumni network in the world.

Let's show why.

Let's lead with strength.

Let's lead with purpose.

Let's lead with Mont Alto.

We are Penn State.

We are Mont Alto.

Compiled and Submitted with Respect and Urgency:

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