

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEGLIGENT BOARD DENIES CONCERNED WATKINS ALUMNI

Last week, Save Watkins Alumni sent an **“Open Letter to the Board of Directors at Watkins College of Art from Concerned Alumni”** requesting that the Watkins-Belmont deal be paused to allow the Watkins Community time to identify more amenable solutions for current students, faculty, and staff. The open letter also requested fundraising approval within a restricted account at Watkins under the college’s 501c3 non-profit status. Fundraising efforts would go towards securing the independent future of Watkins College.

In a meeting with **Save Watkins** representatives and select members of the Watkins Board of Directors on Monday, February 24th, the board refused the creation of such an account at Watkins, effectively denying any potential donors of pledging a tax-deductible donation. The board has, however, approved our request to fundraise and conveniently recommended several unviable fundraising platforms in their attempts to thwart the momentum of the ever-growing **Save Watkins** initiative.

The request to place a **“temporary hold on the plans to give Watkins to Belmont and allow time for the voice of stakeholder representatives to be included in the process of exhausting all possible solutions before closing the doors of the school”** was also denied by the Watkins Board. Despite their fundraising approval, the board’s subsequent denial of time undeniably stunts fundraising potential and highlights yet another empty compromise in their efforts to avoid more public controversy.

To further re-iterate the Open Letter, “If the board had a sincere interest in exploring all possible avenues of funding, one would expect a call for help to be sent out to one of the school’s greatest resources: Watkins alumni. The alumni have not been contacted in the past five years with information noting that our alma mater was in desperate need of financial help. Had we been told, many of us would have offered our time, resources, and money to support Watkins.”

“Watkins cannot be given to a university and maintain the qualities that make it the unique and accessible school that it is today. We should not put the name of our school on a building at a university, reduce it to an existing program, and call it “Watkins”. We cannot abandon the essential core of Watkins and say that the legacy of Samuel Watkins will continue. Without the Watkins faculty, curriculum, and majors, we cannot claim it a deal made in the best interest of securing the mission and vision of the school.”

Despite the impediments set by the Watkins Board of Directors, **Save Watkins** plans to launch a pledge campaign aimed to keep Watkins College of Art open in its current form, work towards a partnership with a different institution, or establishing a Foundation to support students in need. Our goal is to influence institutional changes necessary to support all forms of expressive freedom.



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To view the full Open Letter, visit savewatkins.com

Watkins College of Art is a public non-profit college, founded in 1885, pursuant to the will of Samuel Watkins. It is governed by a board composed of three Commissioners appointed by the Governor, and 16 Trustees. Watkins currently offers career-oriented bachelor of fine arts (BFA) degrees and graduate (MFA) degrees.

Save Watkins is a collective of Students, Faculty, Staff, and Alumni of the Watkins College of Art. Our mission is to secure a safe and open environment for Watkins Students to pursue their education. This may manifest as securing the funding to keep the Watkins College of Art open in its current form, working towards a partnership with a different institution, or changing existing policies at Belmont for the benefit of all current and future Watkins students.

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