

Concordia University Part-time Faculty Association
Association des professeur(e)s à temps partiel de l'Université Concordia

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CUPFA's Statement on the Student Tribunals and Strike Action in the Spring of 2015

Montreal, October 10, 2015 – Concordia University Part-time Faculty Association has issued a statement signed by David Douglas, President, on behalf of the CUPFA Executive. The statement reads as follows:

CUPFA's position is clear. We believe that it is the responsibility of our governments to provide appropriate funding to public services, like education. The recent cuts to universities imposed by the Quebec government has directly affected both our members¹ and the students we serve. Over the last two years part-time positions at Concordia have sharply declined, a trend that CUPFA views as alarming.

In response, we are actively encouraging the Concordia community to mobilize together to protect public services. Along with students and other unions on campus, we have co-organized an educational conference this fall on the impact of austerity. Our goal is to provide a forum to discuss the negative impacts of austerity on Concordia, the community and the world at large. We are proud that our students take an active role in denouncing austerity. We encourage the administration of Concordia to join this campaign.

Last spring, CUPFA applauded the students during their protests against government austerity measures. The cuts to Concordia's operating budget of over \$36 million since 2012 had both short-term and lasting consequences for the Concordia community at large. The Concordia administration, including President Shepard and Provost Benoit-Antoine Bacon, showed their support by recognizing the students' right to peaceful protest and cancelled classes to give students a "day of reflection." Cancelling courses was a bold gesture, one that previous Concordia Presidents were unwilling to contemplate.

We recognize that there were many confusing factors at play during the strike. There were an array of actions employed by the various student departmental associations; some were on strike for a day, some were on strike for a few days; others were on strike indefinitely. For faculty, navigating through quickly changing currents was a perilous activity.

It is our belief given the University's position at the time of the strikes – a position that acknowledged the student activity as legitimate - and given the confusion over which units were on or not on strike, that a reasonable person might find it judicious to err on

¹ <http://concordiaagainstausterity.org/index.php/austerity-at-concordia/>

the side of caution when confronted with a classroom picket situation. At CUPFA, we advocated this position to our own members. We informed them that, although not all students were on strike, if they should encounter a picket line in front of their class, they should prioritise the safety of themselves and their students. Our professors erred on the side of tolerance.

We believe that Concordia should express the same attitude of tolerance in reviewing the events of last spring. As we approach the Oct.19th national elections, it is ironic to hold the view that students need to become more involved in the politics and policy of the present day and simultaneously express our displeasure when they take up that call.

Accordingly, we believe that the Concordia administration should withdraw its name –our name- as co-complainants against the students and furthermore, they should work together with both the students and professors to find a better resolution to a very confusing situation. We believe that using the tribunals to respond to what were clearly political actions in the spring of 2015 attempts to put a disciplinary Band-Aid on a very complicated political wound.

We do not contest the right of the professors to file complaints under the Code - all members of Concordia have the right to file such complaints-- but we do respectfully disagree with their judgement to pursue this course of action as a response to these circumstances.

Finally, to our students: we reiterate our support for you in your pursuit to protect public services. Like you, CUPFA is concerned about the future of education and our ability to provide you with the highest quality education in an increasingly difficult funding environment. We encourage you to voice your opinions, to publish your criticisms and make the case for alternate education policy choices. Our teaching conditions are your learning conditions.

David Douglas, Ph.D., on behalf of the CUPFA Executive
President, CUPFA

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