

we see students and faculty as sharing a common interest in resisting neoliberalism and its austerity measures. We want to acknowledge the formal solidarity offered to us by CUPFA, and hope that we can offer future support to faculty in their own struggles.

On solidarity

The individualization of the strike proposed by the administration is detrimental to the possibilities of solidarity between faculty and students. So while we acknowledge this offer of dialogue from the administration, we know that it is part of the strategy of an institution invested in preserving the status quo. **Unsurprisingly then, the administration's new communication strategy co-opts the language of the student strike while attempting to dictate what a strike at Concordia can look like.** We must remember that the goal of our strike isn't to convince administrators of the validity of our claims but to build a *rapport de force* with the government. Given that the university acts like a buffer between students and the government, it is essential that we ensure an adequate response from Concordia. This includes the extension of our semester, the corresponding remuneration of faculty and extension of their contracts.

We encourage General Assemblies to take clear positions on this issue, and students to take action to pressure the administration. Extended support from the CSU for faculty and striking student associations should include action regarding this matter. As students, we must organize ourselves to determine the shape of our strike and make the force of our demands felt.

March 23rd 2015
Some students

Student Strikes at Concordia: a Brief Analysis of Recent Responses from the Administration

We should start by acknowledging that recent statements from the Concordia administration regarding current student strikes at Concordia are a discursive step in the right direction. Since 2012, a wave of pushes to delegitimize student strikes and associations has played out in the arena of the court system, and in the halls of post-secondary institutions. We've seen the same strategies applied to the labour movement since the sixties. Laws governing the legality of strikes have massively undermined workers' capacities to self-organize and to resist. (e.g. the fact that workers can only strike during contract negotiation, that negotiations can only entail monetary benefits, lock-outs, special laws, etc.) Given this context, the fact that the administration recognizes the strike as such and acknowledges the legitimacy of student democracy is not negligible, and signals the small victories won by student struggles at Concordia in 2012, and ongoing student organizing.

This said, we have some concerns about recent statements from the university administration.

Cancellation and make-up classes

While the administration has announced the cancellation of classes for one day on March 23rd, communications have systematically disavowed the other days and weeks of strikes voted for by various student associations. In communications sent to Fine Arts students, there has been no mention of the April 2nd strike, while for associations with a week-long strike

mandate, e-mails have explicitly emphasized that classes will continue as usual during the planned strike.

Further, there's been no talk about extending the semester to make-up for missed classes. It is clear that the university is invested in preserving the academic calendar at all costs. This is the same strategy used by Concordia in 2012 to the detriment of students and faculty alike. In 2012, when much of the student body in Quebec had been on strike for upwards of seven weeks, Concordia was one of the only institutions that refused to extend the semester. We worry about the consequences for students and faculty if this strategy is repeated.

Student strikes are effective in that they establish *un rapport de force* (a power relationship) with the state by means of economic pressure exerted on the university (e.g. extending contracts, extending class hours, etc.) Refusing to extend the semester and enforcing the normal class calendar is an economic decision that believes the university's interests. This shows how little value the university places on the quality of the education it provides us. The FAQ reminds us that even if we do not attend classes we must complete the course requirements as usual. The value of education in the classroom and the labour of faculty are undermined by the prioritization of following the calendar no matter what.

The strike is a collective action

While e-mails to students refer to the student strikes and their democratic processes, in practice (as we can see in the provided FAQ), Concordia continues to frame the strikes as an individualized matter. The power of strikes lies in collective action, yet the administration downloads its responsibility onto students and faculty, thereby reducing the strike to a matter of

individual decisions and negotiations.

In the FAQ, students are told that if they want to attend classes "as normal" during strike periods other than the 23rd, they can make an individual decision based on individual rights. Students are also encouraged to call security to report picket lines and other disruptions.

Furthermore, the university speaks of wanting to support the faculty, but we question how effectively its response to the strikes actually does this. The burden of dealing with the academic consequences of the strike is placed squarely on the shoulders of faculty members, who are required to finish the semester on schedule. Instructors are responsible for individually setting and negotiating the accommodations required by the strike. They are charged with making alternate arrangements by e-mail in order to ensure the proper functioning of the course. In practice, this means that faculty are asked to increase their workload under the same contract because, in this model, they are made responsible for answering hundreds of personal e-mails, and renegotiate the terms of the syllabus and its deadlines, while having less time to complete grading if accommodations are made. This is particularly felt by short-term contract faculty, whose contracts are currently not being extended by the university and who already face disproportionate work precarity.

These consequences are not the aim of the striking student body, but rather a direct result of the administration's refusal to consider extending the semester, which would require investing in extended contracts and further pay for faculty. We recognize that ongoing cuts to the public funding of higher education (of which this new wave of austerity is just the latest phase) jeopardize the working conditions of faculty as much as they undermine the education received by students. Thus,