

Dear President Alan Shepard,

When you arrived on campus three years ago, you had inherited a culture of contempt; yet since your arrival there has been a change in the emotional atmosphere of this campus. For the first time since 2012, we feel some hope that another Concordia is possible: a Concordia that does not just appreciate the concepts of dialogue, theory and knowledge but values their practical application. Now is the time we need that shift from theory to practice most, as we see the educational integrity of this province, and thus that of our own university, slowly being dismantled before our eyes.

Unlike previous Concordia administrations, yours has shown an increasing respect for the democratic processes and decisions of students, alongside an understanding of the particular socio-political heritage of this province – in essence, an acknowledgment that this student strike, just like 2012, does not have to be a struggle between students, teachers and the administration. Considering the continuing decline of our government's stance towards education, we hope that you, like us, understand that this struggle belongs to everyone in this campus community. We must stand up together against austerity and the cuts to our education system.

In this spirit we ask that you recognize, in accordance with your response to the recent one-day strikes of March 23rd and April 2nd, the importance of extending the semester for students in those departments and faculties affected by the strikes, *including those corresponding to student associations at Concordia that remain on strike* in conjunction with students around the province: the Women's Studies Student Association, the Humanities PhD Student Association, GEOGRADS, and Geography Undergraduate Student Society. We ask that this extension ensure that all the rights, including labour rights, of everyone involved (including professors, teaching assistants, and students) are respected.

President Shepard, extending the semester with respect for the rights of all is the only viable way to ensure that these students attain the academic excellence on which Concordia prides itself, by making up for and thus valuing missed class time and by granting extensions in order for students to complete their academic work with appropriate timelines. Taking this logical next step will increase the institutional pressure on the government that strikes are meant to create. Most relevant to the mandate of the university administration, a semester extension would uphold the academic integrity of this university while encouraging students dedicated to civic

involvement, social justice, and the desire to make the world a better place, to feel they can belong at our university.

Unfortunately many dedicated students, now alumni, were left with dark memories of Concordia because of its administration's failure to deal with the academic situation appropriately during the 2012 strike. Even now in 2015, on picket lines we have seen vitriolic arguments on behalf of male professors threatening to forcefully break picket lines of female students; and students who threaten physical vengeance against strikers instead of showing up to their general assemblies. These confrontations happen when both students and professors feel they are given unclear directives and processes to properly address the existence of student strikes. There is an established history of universities and colleges in Quebec working in tandem with their students to resolve these ambiguities by altering the academic calendar to reflect the dynamics in our classrooms; this has been shown to resolve tensions at risk of escalating by staying idle. Despite the administration's attempt to open up a space of dialogue in light of the student strike, at this particular juncture the continual lack of explicitly clear educational policies for professors to find ways to make up for missed class time and extend academic deadlines, have transformed students' initial hope and sense of solidarity into anxiety and insecurity.

What kind of message do we want to send to the government, but most importantly to students who have served this campus with their intellectual work, their community service, and their commitment to well-funded, quality and accessible education? We have faith that we both seek to send the same message. Extending class time and deadlines will not be able to remedy the experiences of students who were left behind in 2012 by an administration that could not listen to constructive feedback on behalf of students; yet it will inspire students to believe that it is worth continuing to study here, that this university's commitment to community, ethics, and critical analysis makes it stand out from other universities in this city, and that a better education is still possible.

Dr. Shepard, our academic and moral integrity as a university is at stake, but the solution is simple: extend the semester.

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2. Kevin Gould, Department of Geography, Planning and Environment
3. Sébastien Caquard, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Planning and Environment
4. Norman Nawrocki, Faculty, School of Community and Public Affairs
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6. Norma Rantisi, Professor, Department of Geography, Planning and Environment.
7. Abby Lippman, Research Associate, Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Concordia University;
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