

ON AUSTERITY

WHERE AS the government of Quebec plans to cut up to \$1 billion from education, and more than \$172 million from higher education, in the context of so-called austerity measures referred to as “budgetary compressions,”

WHERE AS Concordia University has been requested to make \$15.7 million in cuts to its own budget, and has already begun this process by eliminating jobs through its “Voluntary Departure Program,”

WHERE AS the quality and accessibility of our education is directly and negatively impacted by austerity measures, as is our society as a whole, and especially its most vulnerable members,

WHERE AS austerity measures are part of a larger neoliberal trend of decimating public services and raising user fees, at a time when the wealthiest people and the largest corporations are enjoying record profits and decreasing taxes,

WHERE AS such measures have been denounced by experts worldwide, including Nobel-prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, as well as organizations from OXFAM to the International Monetary Fund (IMF),

BE IT RESOLVED that SoPhiA denounce the prevailing government discourse of austerity and “budgetary compressions,” and advocate for more just and sustainable economic solutions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that SoPhiA urge Concordia’s administration to follow the bold example of the Commission Scolaire de Montréal (CSDM) and the English Montreal School Board (EMSB), and refuse all requested budget cuts.

REGARDING SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC JOB MARKET

Definitions: *Commodification* is the transformation of services or goods from the public sector into the private sector, thereby shifting the cost of said services or goods onto the individual and away from the public sphere.

WHERE AS austerity measures are being further implemented at all levels of public universities by the Québec government

WHERE AS over the past two years Concordia departments have been suffering major funding cuts

WHERE AS TA and non-permanent positions are being cut to reduce costs and that this process affects the quality of the classes and assignments in the philosophy department

WHERE AS for the 2014-2015 class year the number of classes given by the department went down from 60 to 45

BE IT RESOLVED that SoPhiA opposes the *commodification* of education

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that SoPhiA opposes the precarization of academic jobs

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that SoPhiA promotes Philosophy (honours, major and minor) programs not solely as useful to further one's career, but as good in themselves.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that SoPhiA demands the limited use of contractual positions such as LTA and ETA, asking for long-term hire contracts, and that any short-term contract such as LTA or ETA be complemented by a stipend and research opportunities.

Below is an excerpt from a letter addressed to the university concerning LTA hiring practices, with the full support of SoPhiA and the GPSA at the time.

On behalf of the collective student population of the Philosophy department, SoPhiA and the GPSA acknowledge the detrimental effects of austerity measures in Quebec on both the quality of education at Concordia and the increasing precarity of non-permanent staff members, as evidenced by the university's recent hiring practices. Symptomatic of this general trend is the situation currently faced by Limited Term Appointments (LTAs), who, despite taking on increasing workloads as classes are cut and class sizes increase, must renew their contracts year by year to a maximum of three years, with no subsequent possibility to return to their position at Concordia. The current student body is deeply concerned about the quality of education that future generations of students will face if the university continues such hiring practices, which encourages excellent professors to seek other appointments with more stability and dignified benefits.