



Special Edition on Leadership and the School of General Studies

Concordia is about to choose a dean for the proposed School of General Studies. With this job comes a sizable leadership challenge. From an academic standpoint, he or she will be guiding the School in serving Concordia's non-traditional and at-risk students through its four divisions – web courses, off-campus, credit and non-credit. Moreover, the new School is expected to finance all operations through 'profits' from the non-credit sector. This presents a daunting business challenge to the new Dean. The School of General Studies will thus be one of the first, if not the first, self-financing academic unit of its kind in a Quebec university. Concretely, this implies enrolment and revenue increases of epic proportions. If such growth materializes, it will mean huge opportunities for Continuing Education. This initiative could also benefit students in terms of access to enhanced support and services, and play an important role in helping the university improve student retention and achieve its academic mission. However, with the proposed financial model, the university is moving into uncharted territory.

Moreover, preliminary revenue forecasts are based on exceedingly optimistic enrolment projections, especially for non-credit study skills courses. Whoever takes on this job will need to clearly articulate the objectives of the School, have a realistic understanding of the costs and potential revenue of this endeavour, be able to create an environment in which the objectives can be realized, and promote a clear understanding of how to evaluate its success.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Leadership and the School of General Studies
- Update on the School of General Studies
- The question of enrolment
- Solidarity with Concordia unions
- A new leadership programme at Continuing Education
- What our membership thinks about leadership

Leadership and the School of General Studies

In the proposed School of General Studies, Continuing Education (the non-credit division) is going to see its educational mission broaden considerably, with the addition of remedial and bridging programmes of credit and non-credit courses intended for various groups of students. The financial mandate will also expand. While the School of General Studies will include hybrid programmes of both credit and

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non-credit courses, the financing of the new School will come entirely from the profits of the non-credit operations, which are expected to increase exponentially. The General Discussion Document identifies projected study skills courses in particular as a source of revenue. So, on the one hand, the new Dean will face the formidable task of addressing the academic, pedagogical and other needs of the targeted student groups. On the other hand, he or she will have a daunting business challenge: generating enough revenue to support the School, in large part through the very programmes aimed at providing students with academic support. The overall orientation of the new School, according to the Provost, is to support the core mission of Concordia University, namely the provision of undergraduate and graduate education, and the mission of Continuing Education will be 'reoriented' to that end.

What will this reorientation mean in concrete terms? In one sense, it could be seen as the continuation and expansion of a long tradition at Continuing Education, where supporting the mission of the university is nothing new. Nor is this concept alien to the Union. During negotiations for CUCEPTFU's first and second collective agreements, a key component of our negotiations campaign was to highlight the real and potential contributions of Continuing Education to the university. Offering study skills courses for at-risk students was a suggestion we frequently put forward. In fact, a mini-course in study skills was created by Continuing Education for the Faculty of Arts and Science in 1996 and ran until 1998. During that time, the Union made a number of proposals for expanding the programme and the clientele – suggestions which bear a strong resemblance to some of what is currently being proposed for the School of General Studies. Continuing Education has prepared thousands of international and local students to enter undergraduate and graduate studies at Concordia in a highly regarded programme of intensive English for academic and professional purposes. The Centre has also provided courses in GMAT preparation to JMSB students, and in mathematics upgrading for the Faculty of Engineering. In summary, Continuing Education does have an established tradition of supporting the university's mission and the Union has a history of supporting such

initiatives. Within the School of General Studies, the intention is for much greater integration between the non-credit and credit sectors, which should prove beneficial for all concerned.

Nonetheless, important questions still remain unanswered. For one, with this restructuring, the Centre's very *raison d'être* will be to support Concordia's mission. What does this say about the value of Continuing Education's long-standing core mission of adult education, i.e. short, practical programmes for career development and other forms of adult learning? Most importantly, a close look at the assumptions that underpin the financial projections reveal some troubling issues that could mean financial instability for the School of General Studies. How realistic is the proposed cost-recoverable financial model? Can the non-credit sector reasonably be expected to underwrite the expenses of the School, and if so, according to what timeframe, and based on what growth analysis? How quickly will non-credit enrolment need to increase in order to meet financial targets?

These and other issues must be considered from the outset. Naturally, they have been the focus of much discussion and debate in recent Union meetings. Out of these discussions, we have identified the following as critical to the success of the School and of the Dean's tenure:

Develop a realistic plan for growth

The Provost has stated that the School is not meant to be profit generating, only cost-recoverable. This can perhaps be said for the School in general, but the non-credit sector will be under huge pressure to generate enormous profits, and it bears repeating that this implies enrolment and revenue increases of epic proportions. How much of this will come from the proposed remedial and bridging programs, which have been identified as the major areas of growth? We would advise caution in estimating the profits that tuition from

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these courses will generate. So far, the potential has been articulated merely in terms of the numbers of students in the targeted categories, and the assumption is that a high proportion of these students will register. The problem is that these enrolment projections are not based on an analysis of their needs or potential interest in such programs. At-risk students may have deficits in their academic skills, which can be addressed through study skills instruction. On the other hand, their problems may be of a different order, requir-



ing a variety of services and interventions. Overall, common sense and experience dictates beginning with pilot projects which will need adjusting and adapting as they develop and reach fruition. Over time, growth may be considerable, but will likely be incremental and must be based on how well these programs serve the students. The new Dean needs to exercise sound judgment in financial planning, and understand that unrealistic expectations and visions of future greatness in the short term will result in disillusionment and a failure to recognize more realistic accomplishments.

Value the core mission of Cont Ed and the people who deliver this education

Documents and discussions to date have made little mention of the types of programmes we associate with Continuing Education's core mission, although the original Proposal document does list as a priority the need 'to address increasing demands for life-long learning opportunities from members of our external communities'. In response to our queries, we have been assured that this sector is expected to grow; however, no further details are currently available. Presumably, we can expect to have more information once the new Dean is in a position to direct the path of this growth, and we certainly expect that he or she will make adult education a priority, and recognize the potential that exists in our teachers and our current programmes. In fact, the Centre is currently the largest English-language provider of adult education in the Montreal region, with programmes which are known locally and even nationally for innovation and excellence. Students come to Continuing Education to study in fields such as Computer Science, Photography, Communications and Business. At the Language Institute they learn French, Spanish, Arabic and Mandarin, as well as English. The new Dean should place a premium on strengthening these programmes and innovating in ways which will capitalize on the Centre's strengths. He or she must see the role that Continuing Education can play not only within Concordia, but also within the community at large, and then involve everyone in developing the Centre in order to meet the needs of the university and the community.

Put education first

The non-credit sector will be under considerable financial pressure within this new structure. The new Dean will have to ensure that this does not lead to decisions which would increase profits but compromise quality. Academic development in all areas must be grounded in solid pedagogy. Resources must be invested in the technology necessary to keep programmes on the cutting edge. Moreover, addressing the needs of students at risk and other non-mainstream groups implies a comprehensive knowledge of retention research – of what has been tried and proven successful elsewhere. At-risk students, for example, learn best in small, supportive groups, with direct contact with faculty and fellow students. Any move to increase 'efficiency' by

replacing this face-to-face contact with a web-based format is pedagogically unfounded, and runs counter to what is widely accepted as the type of classroom environment these students need in order to thrive. The new Dean must make excellence in teaching and learning a priority.

Set realistic benchmarks for evaluation

The benchmarks for evaluation of the success of the School of General Studies must be based on its overall academic objectives. The laudable goal of the School is to provide a safety net and added support to ensure that students meet their educational goals; in fact, the

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overriding mission of the School could be seen as a large-scale retention programme. The success of the School must be evaluated in terms of what it means in this broader picture. We must also bear in mind the role of the greater university. In fact, it is widely accepted that successful retention strategies involve the collaboration of faculty and staff across campus, and throughout the duration of the students' educational careers. As such, responsibility for the at-risk/visiting/mature/independent students' success cannot reside solely with the School of General Studies, and this must be considered when carrying out any evaluation. The new Dean will need to oversee the development of mechanisms for evaluation over the short, medium and long term which will allow for a realistic assessment of the School's success. Finally, financial objectives should not take precedence over academic and pedagogical goals. How unfortunate would the following scenario be: the School is successful in its mission to help retain at-risk and other students, but is considered a failure because the non-credit sector (Cont Ed) cannot generate the enormous profits required to underwrite the School's expenses?

In conclusion, it bears repeating that this initiative has great potential. The School of General Studies could play a pivotal role in fulfilling Concordia's traditional mission of providing accessible education to students. The success of the School will depend on the new leader's ability to address the issues mentioned above and others, and to engage and inspire the administrators, faculty and staff who will work to make this endeavour a reality.



Update on the School of General Studies

Search for Dean of the School of General Studies

The search process for the Dean of the School of General Studies is proceeding, and the names of the short-listed candidates have been announced. Open meetings will be held on April 16 and 17 for members of the community to meet the candidates. (See News@Concordia on the Concordia website for details.)

Transition Committee

The Transition Committee has met three times. The next meeting will be scheduled for some time in April. The President expects that, following the selection of the Dean, the Transition Committee will still continue in some form, perhaps for up to a year. The Provost suggested that, once hired, the Dean of the School of General Studies may replace him as chair of the Committee.

In January, the Committee identified a number of action items, including the creation of three task forces: one for at-risk students, another to develop a comprehensive marketing strategy and another to examine space issues. The task force on at-risk students has met several times, and is working on developing a policy for at-risk students (those in failed and conditional standing) for May of this year. At the time of publication, the other task forces had yet to be created, but there has been some discussion of beginning to market the School both within Concordia and externally. Interested parties are also meeting to discuss staffing issues. As well, the Centre for Mature Students will be moving into the current Continuing Education premises.

Questions from the Continuing Education Part-Time Faculty Union

Following consultation with the Union Council and General Assembly, a number of questions regarding the School of General Studies were raised at the third Transition Committee meeting and with the Provost.

The Naming of the School

In response to our queries, we were assured that 'School of General Studies' continues to be a working title only. Among CUCEPTFU members, a great concern relates to marketing and the potentially negative consequences to enrolment of losing 30 years of branding as Continuing Education. Throughout Canada, universities and colleges typically use the word 'continuing' for their adult education institutions. Centre for Continuing Studies, Faculty of Continuing Education or Division of Continuing Education are common titles. We stressed the benefits of retaining the term 'Continuing' either as Continuing Education or Continuing Studies, at least for the non-credit division.

Clarifying the Mission of the School

The CUCEPTFU membership has complained about an overall lack of clarity regarding the School's mission. Documents and discussions

to date have made little mention of Continuing Education's core mission. Questions were raised regarding the role of non-credit studies and projections for credit certificate programmes in the adult education sector. Regarding credit certificates, no information is available at this point, and it seems these are matters for the faculties to eventually determine, in collaboration with the School of General Studies. Regarding the non-credit sector we were reassured that Continuing Education's longstanding mission of adult education and language instruction would be maintained. However, its overall mission will be reoriented to support the core mission of Concordia University. It seems that development is expected to centre around the proposed hybrid programmes of credit and non-credit courses for the various categories of students (at-risk, mature, etc.)

The Provost will be preparing a concise mission statement.

Financing of the School

Questions regarding the financing were raised. Our concerns relate to assumptions that underpin the financial projections, notably the projections for sizable profits from the non-credit component of the proposed remedial and bridging programmes. We have pointed to previous experience at Cont Ed in study skills instruction, which generated only modest revenues. We have questioned whether the non-credit sector can reasonably be expected to underwrite the expenses of the School. These questions have yet to be addressed.

Class Size

Upon noting in the recent Discussion document that class size was expected to be a factor in profits from non-credit courses, we raised questions regarding the pedagogical implications for various courses. We were assured that there was no intention of altering class sizes. The current tuition fee model will also be maintained.

Transition Committee Input into the Search for the Dean

Informal meetings with the short-listed candidates and Transition Committee members will be organized.

Transition Committee Report

We suggested that the Committee prepare a report in order to inform the community and provide guidance to those involved in the School's implementation. The matter was discussed, but no conclusion reached.



Enrolment projections for the School of General Studies

The School of General Studies will establish hybrid remedial and bridging programs of credit and non-credit courses for the various categories of students the School is intended to serve. The cost-recoverable financial structure for the School assumes that profits from non-credit courses will underwrite the School's expenses and is based on highly optimistic enrolment projections. But what can realistically be expected in terms of enrolment? Careful planning will be a factor. Also, identifying potential pitfalls will help ensure that students are well served and that the School succeeds in its mission.

In the case of at-risk students, where we are talking about intrusive intervention (a remedial programme as a condition of readmission), the enrolment may be quite high. Even so, there are a number of limiting factors. Most obvious is the reality that not all at-risk students who are readmitted under such conditions choose to return. Even when readmitted without conditions, many do not return. The number is likely to climb when the option involves extra non-credit courses. As well, not all at-risk students require remedial instruction in the form of non-credit study skills courses. They may have money problems, difficulties adapting to university life, personal troubles or health issues. Assuming a one-size-fits-all solution for these students and imposing courses which they may not need does not serve the best interests of these students.

Financial considerations may also be a deterrent. Will students in hybrid programs have access to student loans and bursaries, which are currently restricted to those enrolled in full-time credit programs? Will the extra financial burden be a disincentive to some students? Will they be obliged to 'stop-out' in order to work and save money? Or will they be juggling heavy work and course loads in order to make ends meet? (This was a serious problem noted among many of the at-risk students in previous study skills courses.) Has any support in this area been envisaged? The overriding consideration in all of this must be how to best serve these students, and to provide the conditions and the learning environment which will allow them to succeed.

In the case of mature, visiting, and independent students, the reality may be much different. Many of these students have chosen to study part-time or not to enroll in degree programs. While the programs

that the School of General Studies intends to offer may be very useful to these students, the university will have to convince them to increase their study loads. Can they be enticed to enroll in degree programs, and also increase their course load by adding a couple of non-credit courses? Also, research has shown that attrition among part-time students, which is higher than that of full-time students, is particularly difficult to address, given that many of these students may never have intended to get a degree. Studies at UQAM found that 'the strongest predictor of part-time student attrition was simply whether they intended to get a degree or not, and even university marks (the strongest predictor for full-time students) were not predictive of part-time student attrition.' (Pageau, 2000)

In the case of older students (over 25), studies have found that academic and social integration are less important factors in attrition than other issues such as defining career goals, financial insecurity, and the support of people outside the university. What types of support programs are most appropriate for these students? Counselling and advising services certainly come to mind. Special hybrid programs of credit and non-credit courses as put forward in the Proposal document may also be suitable, but this would have to be very carefully considered, and it remains to be seen just how appealing they would be to this clientele. (Day et al, 2001)

References:

- Pageau, D. (2000) Keys to success: willpower and commitment. Presentation to CIRPA conference, 2000.
Day, V., Murphy, J. and Marriott, E. (2001) What is known about student retention.



General Assembly Motion in Support of Concordia Unions in Negotiations

The secretarial and support staff, technicians and part-time faculty at Concordia play an essential role in university operations and its teaching mission. They work hard to keep the university running and to serve the students. Yet these employees have been without a pay raise for many years. At the CUCEPTFU General Assembly of February 28th, the following motion was passed unanimously:

** In recognition of the valuable contribution of support staff, library employees and technicians and their critical role in university operations;*

** In recognition of the valuable contribution of part-time faculty and their critical role in the teaching mission of the university;*

** Given that our colleagues in these unions have not seen pay increases in many years;*

The CUCEPTFU General Assembly expresses its support for our colleagues and sister unions in their negotiations and urges the university to make every effort to reach expeditious and equitable conclusions to these negotiations.

Since this motion was passed, the library employees have reached an agreement in principle. Let's hope the other three unions will be able to wrap up their negotiations very soon.

A New Leadership Programme at Continuing Education

The Centre for Continuing Education and the Department of Human Resources at Concordia have been mandated by President Lajeunesse to develop a leadership programme for senior academic administrators. Murray Sang at Continuing Education and Yves Gosselin, the Director of Human Resources, along with Anna Michetti and Magalie Kanho, also from Human Resources, are organizing the programme. About 15 or 20 Academic Deans, Academic Programme Directors and Department Chairs who start their terms of office this June will also be going back to school to learn specific leadership and management skills. Eminently qualified in teaching and research, they will have the benefit of a programme which addresses their new administrative, supervisory and budgetary responsibilities.

The programme will be in modular form, with one- or two-day workshops offered throughout the year, for a total of about 50 contact hours. Topics covered include leadership, communication, conflict resolution, accounting for non-financial managers, collective agreements, harassment policies, and managing tenure and workload. Some of the workshops will be taught by experts from within the university while others will be provided by a firm external to the university, which has been selected by tender.



Coming Up: Retention and the School of General Studies

Our next newsletter will focus on the topic of retention. A principal objective of the School of General Studies is to better serve non-mainstream and at-risk students by giving them the support they need to achieve their academic goals. The effort here is toward improved retention, i.e. to increase the numbers of students who successfully pursue their studies to the completion of a degree.

In the upcoming special edition on retention, we will explore what the experts say about retention, and report on the experience of Learning Skills instructors at Continuing Education.

A preview of what people in the field are discovering about retention:

- There is no one programme, no quick fix, to improve retention – comprehensive, multi-pronged strategies are required.

- Students' first semester in university is pivotal in terms of retention.
- Successful retention strategies focus on how the students experience learning throughout their university careers.
- In retention, it is important to think long-term – programmes may take several years to reach fruition.
- For academically at-risk students, the focus should be on intrusive intervention, at the earliest possible moment. Programmes should include courses in basic skills instruction as well as learning and study skills.
- 'Successful education, not retention, is the key to successful retention.' (Tinto, 2006)

References:

- Day, V., Murphy, J. and Marriott, E. (2001) What is known about student retention.
Tinto, V. (2006) Student success and the construction of inclusive educational communities.



What our membership thinks about leadership

In the new School of General Studies, a number of leadership positions will have to be filled, including the Dean and several Directors. We have taken this opportunity to ask our membership what is important for them in a leader. Those who replied gave us a clear picture of what an ideal leader in the university setting would be like.

Vision

'An effective leader should have a vision and be able to communicate the vision to the people he/she is working with.' **Business & Administration**

'A good leader knows what he/she wants to do. It is awfully hard to get others to do what you want if you don't know what you want.' **English**

'A leader is an architect and a construction engineer all in one, that is, someone with a vision but also someone who can turn the vision into practice by presenting it in terms that all involved can understand. He or she shares the vision in a way that makes everybody feel that they are included and that they have a role to play. He or she can maximize what already exists, and build upon it.' **English**

Communication

'A good boss knows his/her employees. He/she works in a team, stimulates them, values their work and helps them to understand the strategies for obtaining the best. A good boss talks and shares with his/her employees.' **Spanish**

'The leader needs to be an excellent communicator and motivator to get students, teachers, and staff on board with him/her.'

Communications

'The qualities of a leader are listening to what people say, not telling people what to do; in other words, leading not dictating, leading by example and demanding excellence. Also, a leader knows that everyone has a stake in success so bringing people into the circle, not excluding them or hoarding information, is very important.' **English**

'A good leader is accessible. He or she is not hard to reach from below, but rather open and available to all.' **English**

People Skills

'He/she must focus on people's strengths, not weaknesses, and affirm the positive in people.' **Learning Skills**

'A leader is a coach, appealing to the best in each person; a mentor, advisor and cheerleader.' **English**

Expertise

'A good leader does their homework. Before starting a new challenge, he or she always tries to find out what others have tried that has succeeded or failed, and tries to create the best conditions for success by learning as much as he or she can at the beginning.' **English**

'In a university, leaders need expertise in pedagogy. There is growing consensus that the student-centered classroom and progressive teaching methods such as the collaborative approach do much to enhance a student's learning and overall university experience. A leader needs to move the university forward by actively promoting and encouraging excellence in teaching.' **Learning Skills**

Personal Qualities

'The important traits of a leader include motivation, honesty, integrity, self-confidence, knowledge of the programmes, and charisma.' **Business & Administration**

Labour

'A good leader is comfortable in a unionized environment and takes a problem-solving, interest-based approach to labour relations.' **English**

The Field of Continuing Education

'The leader must have a vision of growth and opportunity for Continuing Education and a knowledge of the programmes. He/she must be able to sustain and support Continuing Education programmes and be a planner and analyst who understands the purpose and goals of Continuing Education. He/she must be a good representative and advocate for Continuing Education.' **Learning Skills**

'The leader needs to fully understand our mandate at Continuing Education so that our students aren't disappointed with the new direction the Centre will take.' **Photography**

'The leader needs to understand the reality of the high-tech departments such as the Computer Institute, the Digital Photography department, the Digital Video and Animation departments, and the Graphics department. When an institution decides to offer courses in these extremely complex and competitive fields, the equipment required to teach these courses always needs to be at the highest end of the spectrum because the students will demand nothing less.' **Photography**

