

Classes as usual if teachers walk off, Concordia insists

Part-time staff to launch rotating strikes next week

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Concordia University says it will be business mostly as usual and students, faculty and staff will be expected to show up when part-time teachers walk off the job next week.

In fact, the university says it expects students to show up and hand in their course work, even in those classes where their professor is away.

Starting Monday, the university's 900 part-time professors will launch rotating strikes to press their demands for a new contract. They have been without an agreement or a wage hike since 2002.

"We've been picking cotton in the fields for six years," said Maria Peluso, president of the Concordia University Part-time Faculty Association. It was "with the deepest regret," she said, that the union's bargaining team decided to carry through on the strike vote members adopted by a resounding 97 per cent in October.

Flanked by student leaders from Concordia and union heads representing lecturers at Université de Montréal and Université du Québec à Montréal, Peluso said Concordia should be "on red alert." "We have nothing to fear because we have nothing to lose."

Sporadic walkouts in several depart-

ments will escalate unless the university picks up the pace at the negotiating table, Peluso said. A bargaining session is scheduled to take place today.

Lecturers at Concordia earn \$5,400 to teach a three-credit, 13-week course. The union says that's \$1,054 less than their counterparts at Université de Montréal earn and \$2,000 less than the rate for part-time university faculty in Abitibi and Rimouski.

But Peluso said her members are also weary of being treated like second-class citizens, with large classes, paltry benefits and the uncertainty that awaits those hired to fill holes in the academic calendar. "I've been teaching 26 years and I'm still nothing but a TBA (to be announced)," she said.

Concordia said yesterday it expects the bulk of classes will not be disrupted, and part-time teachers are not likely to prevent other faculty from teaching.

"At present, these disruptions do not target the final exam period, although the university is prepared in the event that these actions continue," the university said in a statement.

Students will be able to find out more at www.concordia.ca

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