



Hillel V. CSU Executives

Complaint Received: Monday, November 3, 2025

Hearing: Friday, January 16, 2026

Decision: Friday, January 23, 2026

Complainant:

Hillel Concordia

- Samantha Chankowsky,
- Representative

Respondent:

The CSU Executive Team for the 2025-2026 Term

- Isabella Providenti-Academic & Advocacy Coordinator
- Danna Ballantyne-External Affairs & Mobilization Coordinator
- Ryan Assaker-Finance Coordinator (Absent)
- Vanessa Massot-General coordinator
- Leo Litke- Internal Affairs Coordinator
- Aya Kidaei-Loyola Coordinator
- Arevig Nahabedian- Student life coordinator
- Mia Kennedy- Sustainability Coordinator

Judicial Board:

- Dara Younes
- Ouswa Ben Rejeb
- Aya Saad

STATEMENT OF FACTS & TIMELINE

1. On November 3, 2025, the Judicial Board received a formal complaint filed by Samantha Chankowsky, acting in her capacity as a representative of Hillel Concordia (“the Complainant”).
2. The complaint alleges that the Concordia Student Union (“CSU”) Handbook, published by the Respondent CSU Executive Team for the 2025-2026 term in early September 2025, contains material that violates CSU governing documents and fosters a hostile campus environment.

Specifically, the Complainant alleges that:

 - i. Pages 40-41 of the Handbook, labeled as a “Strike Guide,” encourage the use of “hard picketing.”
 - ii. Page 63 of the Handbook advises students on concealing personal identity in situations described as high-tension or confrontational on campus.
 - iii. The Handbook devotes a disproportionate amount of content to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, thereby creating the perception that students are expected to adhere to a particular political viewpoint advanced by the CSU.
 - iv. The overall effect of this content is the creation of a campus environment where Jewish and Israeli students cannot feel safe expressing their views or identities.
3. The complainant pleads that the content of the handbook contradicts Section 5.6 of the CSU Positions Book, which calls for respect and kindness toward all religious and cultural minorities and for fostering a safer and more inclusive Concordia University community.
4. The Complainant submitted five (5) pages from the CSU Handbook as supporting evidence with the initial complaint.
5. The Complainant seeks the following remedies:
 - a. The immediate withdrawal of all remaining copies of the CSU Handbook from circulation.
 - b. The removal from office of the CSU Executive Team members involved in the Handbook’s publication.
 - c. The issuance of a public apology and correction on the CSU’s official social media channels for publishing material deemed insensitive and discriminatory.

See Annexe A.

6. On November 5, 2025, the Judicial Board issued a formal notification to the named Respondents pursuant to section 5.38 of the CSU Judicial Board Code of Procedure, advising them that a complaint had been filed in which they were named as respondents. The notice included a copy of the complaint and supporting documents. In accordance with section 5.40 of the Code, the Respondents were advised that they

had three days from receipt of the notice to submit a written response, whether jointly or individually, to the Judicial Board.

- a. On November 7, 2025, the CSU Executive Team submitted a written response denying all allegations, asserting that the Handbook complies with CSU policies, reflects long-standing democratically adopted positions, and rejecting the remedies sought by the Complainant as unfounded and disproportionate.

See Annex B.

- 7. By written notice dated November 17, 2025, the Judicial Board informed both the Complainant & respondents that the hearing in the case brought by Hillel Concordia against the CSU Executive Team was scheduled for Friday, January 16, 2026
 - The notice further specified that any party facing significant and unavoidable conflicts with the scheduled date was required to notify the Judicial Board within 72 hours of receipt of the notice, and that requests for rescheduling would only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
 - a. By December 5, 2025, both the Complainant and Respondents confirmed their attendance for the Hearing.
- 8. On January 15, 2026, at 8:39 PM, notably after business hours, the Complainant sent an email to the Judicial Board stating that a representative would not be able to attend the scheduled hearing. The complainant did not formally request a postponement, propose an alternative date, or provide substantiating evidence for the inability to attend.
 - a. The Judicial Board therefore proceeded on the basis that the hearing would go forward as scheduled.
- 9. The Complainant did not appear at the hearing on January 16, 2026, at 10:00 AM, and was not represented.
- 10. The Respondent CSU Executive Team appeared in the hearing and argued their case.
 - a. The Respondents defended the Handbook as a legitimate exercise of the CSU's educational, advocacy, and service mandate to its membership, consistent with past practice and the Union's democratically established political positions.
 - b. They argued that the cited sections provide logistical and safety information to students exercising their legal rights to protest and assemble, and do not constitute an incitement to violence or intimidation.
 - c. Regarding the focus on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Respondents stated this reflects a significant and ongoing concern for a substantial portion of the membership, and that providing educational resources on a major global issue is within the CSU's purview.
 - d. The Respondents contended that the complaint failed to identify any specific, actionable violation of a CSU bylaw or standing regulation, and relied on a subjective interpretation of the Positions Book's guiding principles.
 - e. They further argued the complaint did not demonstrate any direct, concrete harm caused by the Handbook's publication, as opposed to generalized feelings of discomfort with the CSU's political stances.

ANALYSIS

- 1. Burden of Proof:** The burden of proof rests solely on the Complainant. It is the Complainant's responsibility to present evidence and arguments sufficient to convince the Judicial Board that it is more probable than not that the Respondent violated a CSU bylaw, standing regulation, or other governing document. The Board cannot rule in favor of a claim that is unsupported or unsubstantiated.
- 2. Failure to Prosecute the Complaint:** The Complainant's decision not to appear at the scheduled hearing constitutes a critical failure to prosecute their complaint. This absence deprived the Judicial Board of its essential function: to hear live testimony, test the evidence and its interpretation, ask clarifying questions, and evaluate the credibility and nuance of the arguments. A written submission alone is an untested allegation. By choosing not to participate, the Complainant forfeited the opportunity to persuade the Board, counter the Respondent's defense, or contextualize their claims against direct questioning.
- 3. Assessment of the Written Complaint vs. Live Defense:** The Board has reviewed the Complainant's written allegations. In contrast, it received a substantive, live defense from the Respondents, who provided context for the Handbook's creation, explained its purpose within the CSU's broad mandate, and challenged the Complainant's interpretation of the Positions Book. The Complainant offered no counter-argument to this defense. Uncontested, the Respondent's testimony that the Handbook was created for legitimate student service and advocacy purposes stands unrebutted.
- 4. Interpretation of CSU Positions Book Section 5.6:** The Respondents clarified under testimony that the disputed content is not novel to the current term, but rather consists of material either reproduced from past CSU publications or developed in direct accordance with longstanding, officially ratified Union positions. Their stated intent was informational and educational, consistent with the CSU's mandate. In light of this context where the material is derived from institutional history and aligns with democratically established stances - the Board finds that the Complainant's unexamined written allegations do not meet the threshold required to demonstrate an objective breach of Section 5.6. Disagreement with the content of longstanding CSU positions does not, in itself, constitute a violation of the aspirational principles that guide the Union's conduct, nor does it justify the extraordinary sanction of removing sitting executives.
- 5. Lack of Nexus to Enforceable Bylaw or Regulation:** The complaint hinges on an alleged violation of the Positions Book, a document that outlines the CSU's stances on various issues. The Board notes that while the Positions Book guides the Union's actions, it is distinct from the *Standing Regulations* or *By-Laws*, which contain the enforceable rules governing member conduct and electoral sanctions. The Complainant did not identify a violation of a specific, actionable bylaw or regulation.
- 6. Severity of Requested Remedies:** The remedies sought removal from office and forced retraction of publications are among the most severe actions the Judicial Board can contemplate. Granting such remedies requires clear, convincing, and substantiated

evidence of a gross violation or action in bad faith. The evidence presented, consisting of a partial written complaint and a non-appearance, falls profoundly short of this high threshold.

DECISION

For the reasons stated above, the Judicial Board **UNANIMOUSLY DISMISSES** the complaint in its entirety.

The Complainant, Hillel Concordia, has not met its burden of proof to establish a violation of the CSU Positions Book or any other governing document.

No remedy is granted.

DISSENTING OPINION

No member dissented. The decision is unanimous.

ANNEXE A

CSU Judicial Board — General Complaint Form	
Are you submitting this complaint as an individual or on behalf of a Club?	Club
Your name	Samantha Chankowsky
Student ID	40285847
Your email address	samchankowsky@gmail.com
Club name	Hillel Concordia
Names of other individuals involved	Names of other individuals involved: Chana Leah Natanblut - President of Chabad Student Group at Concordia University Anastasia Zorchinsky - President of The StartUp Nation at Concordia
Is your complaint regarding an individual or a Club?	Individual
Name(s) of individuals whom your complaint refers to	Isabella Providenti, Academic & Advocacy Coordinator, academic@csu.qc.ca Danna Ballantyne, External Affairs & Mobilization Coordinator, external@csu.qc.ca Ryan Assaker, Finance Coordinator, finance@csu.qc.ca Vanessa Massot, General Coordinator, coordinator@csu.qc.ca Leo Litke, Internal Affairs Coordinator, internal@csu.qc.ca Aya Kidaei, Loyola Coordinator, loyola@csu.qc.ca Arevig Nahabedian, Student Life Coordinator, studentlife@csu.qc.ca Mia Kennedy, Sustainability Coordinator, sustainability@csu.qc.ca
Date and time of incident(s)	September 4, 2025
Subject of complaint	CSU Handbook

Summary of incident(s)	<p>Summary of incident(s)*: In early September, the CSU published a handbook which promoted behaviours not in keeping with Concordia University's Code of Rights and Responsibilities. The violations, listed below, all serve to create a hostile environment in which minority communities, especially Jewish and Israeli students, cannot feel safe expressing their views or identities on campus.</p> <p>Strike Guide (pgs. 40-41): The strike guide encourages hard picketing, which translates into denying students who choose not to participate in any given strike the right to attend the classes they paid for.</p> <p>Concealing Identity (pg. 63): When identities are concealed, especially in the high tension situations that have become so common on campus, it creates a reality in which students holding minority views have limited options to protect themselves.</p> <p>In addition to the above issues, the handbook also spends a disproportional amount of time on the Palestinian-Israel Conflict, creating the sense that students must adhere to the viewpoint pushed by the CSU. The focus on the Conflict, combined with the calls for hard picketing and concealed identities suggests that students whose views differ from the CSU's on this issue are not unlike unwelcome, but in danger on campus. This contradicts section 5.6 of the CSU Position Book, "The CSU calls for respect and kindness towards all religious and cultural minorities in our community and calls on the Concordia University community to foster a safer and more inclusive space for people of all cultures and religions".</p>
Supporting Documents	<p>1_5875.jpeg 2_4412.jpeg 4_6148.jpeg 5_4434.jpeg 6_2486.jpeg</p>
Description of supporting documents	5 pages from the CSU handbook.

Describe what action should be taken in response to this complaint.	<p>Actions that should be taken in response to this complaint include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Withdrawal of any remaining copies of the CSU handbook from circulation 2. Removal of involved CSU executives from office 3. Issuing of a public apology and correction on the CSU's social media for publishing insensitive and discriminatory material
	Accepted

WHAT DID YOU MISS AT CONCORDIA LAST YEAR?

Remnants of torn-down stickers, cameras inside new washrooms, reduced shuttle bus times, and an abundance of over-friendly security have become the new norm on Concordia's campus. With high levels of student repression, an international rise in fascism, and sharp austerity measures on campus, these past few years have fuelled a strong culture of militant mobilization on Concordia's campus.

So... what have you missed?
(Between you and me, we won't find these posted on the official Concordia calendar)

September 5th
Concordia Provost and VP Academic, Anne Whitslaw, sends an internal memo prohibiting departments from posting political statements. The university also removed departmental political statements from Concordia's website.

September 12th & 25th
Students stage a picket, discussion, and demonstration as a series of responding actions, leading to the violent arrest of three people and the suspension of two students.

October 7th
A walkout staged by Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) at Concordia is met with a very large police presence of both Sûreté du Québec and SPVM officers.

October 10th
Concordia censors Regards Palestiniens film screening; film screening is moved outside.

October 31st
Cops off Campus Halloween protest results in **three more arrests**. CSPS is captured on video violently detaining students and attempting to zip tie their legs together.

November 1st
CSU hosts a Cops off Campus press conference and issues a press release.

November 4th-19th
Students from departments across Concordia vote to go on strike on Nov. 21-22 with demands for Concordia to: cut military employment partnerships; sever academic ties with Israeli universities; drop the suspensions against protesters; abolish certain aggressive security practices; and cut ties with the SPVM, not allowing cops on campus. This strike was part of an international one-day strike for Palestine on Nov. 21 and a mobilization against NATO in Montreal on Nov. 22.

November 18th
The previous director of the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery is allegedly fired for supporting Palestine.

November 19th
Concordia emails students a message calling on "all community members and groups [...] to denounce violence in all its forms." In this email, they deny the allegations that "CSPS agents have initiated confrontations and even chased protesters on campus."

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January 30th
Graham Carr releases a statement reaffirming Concordia's position against BDS and calling the SGM "troubling" due to the presence of "heavily masked individuals, complaints of discriminatory behaviour and the use of intimidation tactics."

February 6th
CSU releases a statement condemning Graham Carr's Jan. 30 statement alongside the SPHR Concordia rally outside the B60 meeting. The protest marches to McGill, where their B60 is also meeting. Paint is thrown at the McGill James Administration Building.

February 20th
Anonymous students hold a sit-in at the Hall Building mezzanine against the repression of student activism. They call for boycott and divestment as part of a La CRUES day of action. Shortly before the protest was set to begin, the Hall Building mezzanine was fenced off, and police were stationed outside the building. At 2:30 p.m., protesters entered the building, tore down fences, and occupied the space, chanting and dancing.

March 6th
Students and faculty organize a funeral procession to protest the genocide in Palestine and the attacks on academic freedom. They walk from the ER Building to the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, and end at the CSU lounge for speeches, including from activist Ellen Gabriel.

March 26th
Dawson & SPHR Concordia stage walkout during La CRUES week of action.

This is just a shortened summary of the many ways Concordia students have mobilized against campus repression and have continued to call for the university to adopt BDS. The legacy of organizing on campus is often quick to be co-opted by the administration, but it is our responsibility to engage in the movement in whatever capacity we can. We hope this timeline inspires and informs your understanding of how we can continue to fight against repression.

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THE STRIKE GUIDE

Striking for accessible education is not only a political act—it is a spiritual one. It is the acknowledgment of an intergenerational legacy of resistance. We do not act alone nor for ourselves alone. The student radicals of today owe their place in the classroom—and their freedom to dissent—to those who came before, who withheld their academic labour so that tuition fees might someday not be a barrier. To strike now is to honour the courage, sacrifice, and solidarity of past movements. It is to carry forward a collective duty; to resist the commodification of knowledge and to protect the commons of education from encroaching privatization.

In Quebec, the threat of a general unlimited strike can be an effective tool to target the provincial government due to the education funding structure. Student strikes are a powerful way of disrupting certain ideas of what the university is for: making autonomous student-controlled spaces, and creating moments of possibility for larger actions due to the disruption of business as usual. In Canada, universities are in the crosshairs of the neoliberal order, which seeks to turn schools into degree-granting institutions focused on market productivity and individual achievement, and students into individual consumers of the prerequisites to survive under capitalism. By going on strike, we reject our individualization and the commodification of education, and we practice taking collective action in the places where we spend our time and energy. Striking forces the institution to acknowledge that we are not passive consumers of degrees, that our labour as both students and community members is what makes the university.

Quebec's student movement is rooted in a long and militant history of collective action. Since the late 1960s, students have turned to strikes as a political weapon to resist tuition hikes, demand systemic reforms, and defend the principle of accessible education. Over the decades, waves of coordinated action have repeatedly proven effective in forcing governments to retreat or compromise, from the early fights for loans and bursaries to the massive mobilizations of the 1990s and 2000s. The 2012 strike, the largest and most sustained in Quebec's history, galvanized close to 310,000 students (out of 400,000 in the province) in opposition to tuition increases, and inspired a generation of organizers.

The debate around student strikes often exposes deeper ideological rifts between neoliberal individualism and collective responsibility. In the instance of tuition, governments advancing austerity measures frame education as a private investment, reducing students to consumers. In contrast, the student strike tradition in Quebec sees education as a social right that is accessible to all and defended collectively. Striking becomes not only a reaction to tuition increases, but a refusal of the logic that isolates students from one another and pits them in competition. Student strikes are powerful because students are not actually individual consumers of education. Universities are heavily subsidized by the provincial government, meaning that the government has a financial incentive to get a "return on their investment" by producing graduates and trained workers. In this context, if a significant

number of students were to go on a general unlimited strike to the point of losing an entire year of school and not graduating, a “double cohort effect” would occur, forcing the government to subsidize twice as many students the following year. This looming threat is part of what makes even shorter strikes effective, due to the socialized funding of education, the government has a great deal to lose if students seriously disrupt the system.

a. Why it's not a 'boycott'

Calling a strike a “boycott” is a strategic mischaracterization. A boycott is an individual act of refusal to consume. A strike is a collective withdrawal of labour or participation, democratically decided and enforced. A student strike is not about students opting out—it's about organizing together to disrupt business as usual to force political change. The language of “boycott” depoliticizes the action and strips it of its confrontational and historical weight.

b. Why strikes are legitimate

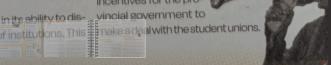
Strikes are legitimate because they are the democratic expression of student unions, made through general assemblies that meet quorum and vote on mandates. These decisions represent collective will and are recognized under the legal and institutional frameworks of accredited student associations. Strikes are also morally legitimate—a response to systemic injustice that threatens access to education and social equity. They are one of the few, if not the only, effective tools students have to resist top-down policies imposed without their consent.

c. Why strikes block everyone

The strength of a strike lies in its ability to disrupt the normal functioning of institutions. This is typically done through picket lines that physically prevent classes from starting. Blocking classes and picketing buildings are not acts of exclusion but of resistance. Like a workplace strike, they only apply pressure to the institution when they are a generalized withdrawal of labour, and having some people cross the picket line (i.e. scabbing) opens the door to academic punishment for students who follow the strike mandate. The purpose is not to impose on others arbitrarily, but to collectively create pressure on administrations, governments, and the public to respond to student demands. Symbolic strikes can raise awareness about an issue, but general and sustained strikes have the power to actually disrupt the university to the point of conceding on major demands. In this sense, blocking access is not a denial of choice but a refusal to allow the continuation of an unjust system without consequence.

d. Dealing with 'You can go on strike, but I'll go to class'

This position misunderstands both the purpose and function of a strike. Individual dissent is natural, but in a democratic union, collective decisions apply to all members. Saying “I'll go to class anyway” undermines the shared power of students and erodes solidarity, allowing institutions to ignore mobilization. Just as a workplace strike wouldn't allow scabbing, a student strike depends on everyone respecting the collective mandate. If we're serious about defending accessible education, we must act together—even when it is inconvenient or difficult. Breaking the strike also compromises the threat of a “double cohort effect,” which lessens the financial incentives for the provincial government to make a deal with the student unions.

ANNEXE B



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Montreal, QC H3G 1M8
514 848-7474 | www.csu.qc.ca

Friday, November 7th, 2025

Response to November 5th notice of Judicial Board complaint

Dear members of the CSU Judicial Board,

We, the 2025-2026 CSU Executive team, vigorously oppose the allegations and demands made by Samantha Chankowsky in her Judicial Board complaint regarding the 2025-2026 CSU Handbook.

As was clarified when a substantively similar motion was presented, and subsequently rejected by the CSU Council in September 2025, the Handbook in question does not violate any CSU Policies nor does the content included endanger any members of the CSU Community. Rather, all content included is either reused material from previous handbooks dating back to the early 2000s, or informational content relating to issues directly affecting our membership; most importantly all content is closely aligned with existing CSU Positions.

The CSU has a long-standing, democratically adopted position on Palestinian solidarity, reaffirmed through multiple General Assemblies and Council motions over the past two decades. Inclusion of related educational or advocacy material in the Handbook therefore falls squarely within the CSU's mandate to inform members about its political positions and campaigns.

Not only does Ms. Chankowsky's complaint fail to clearly provide evidence of harm caused by the handbook or CSU Policies violated, her request of withdrawing remaining copies and impeaching the entire executive team is unfeasible and frankly grossly disproportionate. Furthermore, as we do not believe that any material published was discriminatory nor in violation of any enforceable bylaws or policies, we wholeheartedly reject the demand of publishing a public apology on the matter.

Thank you,

The CSU 2025-2026 Executive Team