

ISSUE No.8

Your Generosity in Action

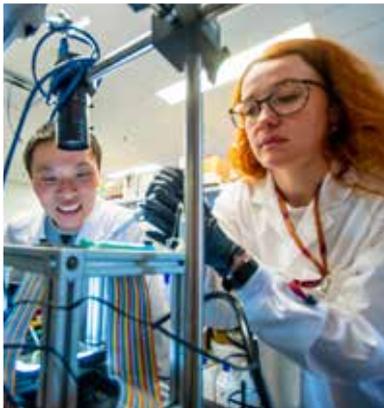
momentum

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER FOR LOYAL CONCORDIA DONORS

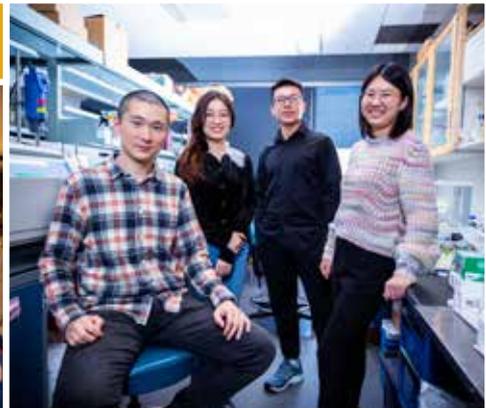
2023
CONCORDIA

Campaign at a glance

Supporters of the **Campaign for Concordia: Next-Gen Now** give for a variety of reasons, and to a variety of designations, too. Here are five key areas that benefited from donor generosity in the 2022 calendar year.



Research: \$5,100,209



Recreation and athletics: \$455,395



Lecture series: \$63,680



Libraries: \$1,222,890



Equipment: \$294,465





A message from
Graham Carr

The road to 50

The Concordia community will soon mark half a century since the merger of Loyola College and Sir George Williams University changed the face of post-secondary education in Montreal.

As we make plans to celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2024-25, I can't help but reflect on how far we've come. Our two campuses have been transformed, our research output has soared, our reputation, both nationally and internationally, has skyrocketed, and we are now a destination university for students from around the globe.

And our momentum continues. A number of events and successes — many outlined within these pages, others on the horizon — promise to make our milestone anniversary a golden one.

In the 2022 edition of the *Times Higher Education* (THE) Young University Rankings, Concordia placed first in Canada and fifth among newer North American universities. We were also ranked first in the annual *QS Top 50 Under 50* list.

Our commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals won notice in 2022 from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education and from a group of ambassadors from Nordic Europe, who asked to meet with our researchers to discuss effective responses to the climate crisis.

The work of our Applied AI Institute, launched a year ago, promises to address challenges in medical diagnostics, critical infrastructure and more, and support our co-leadership of a federally funded consortium on cybersecurity.

As we design our new School of Health, we hope to chart new ground in preventive and community health research and action, as well as biomedical sciences and engineering.

Our Quebec-first Kaié:ri Nikawerà:ke Indigenous Bridging Program and implementation of the President's Task Force on Anti-Black Racism will help ensure that Concordia is a more equitable place to study and work.

Improved access to programs outside of the classroom will help us meet this goal as well. Just last fall, we made a commitment to offer every undergraduate one experiential learning opportunity as part of their academic program. We'll expand that to two per student by 2025.

There are no limits to what a well-rounded university experience can provide. Concordia students proved this throughout 2022, whether it was our three Winter Olympic medallists or our Rhodes, Schwartzmann and McCall MacBain scholars.

Our donors are energizing the Campaign for Concordia with major gifts to strengthen the innovation economy, creative arts therapy programs, women's varsity sports and many other causes that benefit society.

As we close one chapter of Concordia's history on the road to our 50th anniversary, I want to thank you for your generosity. I hope you take pride in how your support has contributed to our success and growth.

Sincere regards,

Graham Carr, President and Vice-Chancellor

Spotlight on innovation

The progress Concordia researchers have made on a range of societal and global challenges continues to generate notice and acclaim — and critical funding support.

\$6M for innovative genomics research

Adrian Tsang, a Department of Biology professor and director of the Centre for Structural and Functional Genomics, was awarded \$6 million from Genome Canada and Génome Québec to advance research on alternatives to livestock-feed antibiotics.

G7 summit taps department chair

The expertise of **Vivek Venkatesh**, MA 03, PhD 08, chair of the Department of Art Education and UNESCO Co-Chair on the Prevention of Radicalization and Violent Extremism, was called upon at two events last November: a G7 research summit on the future of human health, and the hearings of the Government of Canada's Public Order Emergency Commission, led by Justice Paul Rouleau.



"I really valued these past five years at Concordia," says recent graduate Isaac Blaise Djoko, PhD 22.

Conservation in Cameroon

Under the supervision of **Robert Weladji**, graduate program director with the Department of Biology, research led by **Isaac Blaise Djoko**, PhD 22, illuminated novel ways that elephants and humans could more peacefully co-exist in parts of Djoko's native Cameroon.

\$1M for cybersecurity

The Department of National Defence awarded Concordia researchers \$1 million to develop effective deterrents to ward off potential cyberattacks. The project is led by **Khashayar Khorasani**, professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Honorary Concordia University Research Chair in Control of Autonomous Network of Unmanned Systems (Tier 1).



"We noticed decreases in urban sprawl in 27 of the 30 cities that had greenbelts," says Parnian Pourtaherian, MSc 22.

Benefits of green space touted

An exhaustive study led by **Parnian Pourtaherian**, MSc 22, and co-authored by **Jochen Jaeger**, associate professor in the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, demonstrated how protective open spaces — or greenbelts — can mitigate the harmful effects of unchecked urbanization.

Concordia at COP27

A delegation of experts represented Concordia at the 27th annual UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) in November. Among those at the summit: **Matthias Fritsch**, Department of Philosophy professor; **Carmela Cucuzzella**, BSc 90, BFA 05, Concordia University Research Chair in Integrated Design and Sustainability for the Built Environment (Tier 2); and **Mostafa Saad**, a 2022 Public Scholar and building engineering doctoral student.





Royal accolades

Six researchers were honoured last fall by the Royal Society of Canada: **Catherine Mulligan**, Department of Building, Civil and Environmental Engineering; **Emad Shihab** and **Tristan Glatard**, both with the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering; **Ehab Abouheif**, BSc 93, MSc 95; **Charmaine Nelson**, BFA 94, MFA 95; and **Wen Tong**, PhD 93.



Emad Shihab, Catherine Mulligan and Tristan Glatard

\$1M for nanoparticle breakthroughs

The work of a nanoparticle lab on post-operative wound healing was supported with a \$1-million NSERC Alliance grant. “We use low-powered lasers and excite nanomaterials, generating heat to close up wounds with minimal damage,” says lab director **Rafik Naccache**, BSc 00, MSc 07, PhD 12, Concordia University Research Chair in Sustainable Multifunctional Nanomaterials (Tier 2).



Léon Franzen

Eyes on brands

A cross-faculty study led by **Léon Franzen**, a postdoctoral fellow and cognitive neuroscientist, explored how our pupils respond to iconic — and less well-known — commercial products. From corporate research to clinical settings, the research — which garnered support from the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture — “could be used in a variety of contexts,” says Franzen.



Kerri Delaney and Sylvia Santosa

The origins of diabetes

In a paper published by the journal *Obesity Reviews*, researchers **Kerri Delaney**, PhD candidate in Concordia’s Individualized program, and **Sylvia Santosa**, Canada Research Chair in Clinical Nutrition (Tier 2), analyzed how the onset of diabetes may differ between the sexes, based on the hypothesis that the risk is driven by expansions of visceral fat in men and subcutaneous fat in women.

Learn about our community’s latest advancements at concordia.ca/research.

Bouclair



A DECORATED SHOWCASE FOR THE ARTS

Few areas of Montreal have been redeveloped in recent times quite as dramatically and rapidly as Griffintown.

Located southwest of the city's downtown core, the historic neighbourhood has changed a lot over the last decade. What was once a sparsely populated enclave has been transformed by a pronounced skyline, waves of new residents and a crop of chic restaurants, cafés and shops.

One of those shops belongs to Bouclair, a historic Montreal brand that has also undergone a sea change.

The makeover has largely been orchestrated by Peter Goldberg (pictured), Bouclair's owner and CEO.

After the Montrealer and father of five purchased the company in 2003, he pivoted Bouclair from a chain of fabric stores to a furniture and home-decor lifestyle brand with a robust online presence.

Brick-and-mortar stores are still a big part of Bouclair's business, however, and the Griffintown outpost is a special one — with a notable Concordia connection to boot.

"Rather than just open up another store where we display and sell products — which is fine, that's what we do, after all — we wanted to try a different approach," says Goldberg. "What became vitally important to us was to find a way to build connections with our community. And a wonderful way to do that is through art — and through support of local artists in particular."

Established with a gift of \$54,000, the Bouclair Residency in Digital Arts will facilitate the creativity of recent Concordia fine-arts graduates through a generous honorarium and professional experience and exposure.

"What became vitally important to us was to find a way to build connections with our community."

Quite literally, too, as the exposure will take place on massive exterior screens at Galerie B, a space at Bouclair's Griffintown store that showcases emerging artists, many of whom were nurtured at Concordia.

The inaugural Bouclair residents had works on display at the rich multimedia environment through the months of February, March and April 2023. They included: Tamar Zehava Tabori, BFA 20, a contemporary dance artist and experimental filmmaker; Alfred Muszynski, BFA 21, whose work combines painting, performance and digital media; and Sarah-Mecca Abdourahman, BFA 20, a painter and video artist.

The initiative is a collaboration between Bouclair and Concordia's Art Volt — a donor-funded platform that helps alumni embark on artistic careers. Art enthusiast Goldberg describes it as a way to distinguish his company's concept store and foster local talent at the same time.

"Montreal's artistic scene is widely admired, and deservedly so," he says. "But our artists often struggle to be seen. I'm proud of the fact that we can help remedy that with this residency partnership with Concordia."



STUDENT PROFILE

Victoria D'Amours

DRIVEN TO REHABILITATE BRAIN TRAUMA

Victoria D'Amours was a figure skater in an elite program until the age of 15, when a nasty fall left her with a concussion.

"Sadly, concussions were not taken seriously enough back then, which made the recovery much longer than it should have been," she says.

The setback may have ended her competitive career, but it also inspired an ambition to help other athletes.

"From personal experience, I know how hard it is to contend with that kind of injury," remarks D'Amours.

With an interest in both biology and psychology, the native of Lévis, Quebec, found a natural fit in the Behavioural Neuroscience program at Concordia.

D'Amours lived in Hingston Hall on Loyola Campus for her first year. It was an ideal way to transition to life in Montreal, she says.

"I made many lasting friendships. It was eye-opening to meet people with different perspectives and from different cultures."

The Dr. Lorrie K. Sippola Memorial Award — created in 2011 with a significant bequest from the late Lorrie K. Sippola, PhD 96 — also helped D'Amours make the most of her undergraduate experience. The honour, which she received in 2022, came with \$4,000 in financial support.

Through the university's Science College, D'Amours has done research at the Center for Studies in Behavioral Neurobiology's Iordanova Lab, using behavioural models and neuroscience techniques to understand how the brain processes information.

"Look beyond the classroom. Get involved and get out of your comfort zone!"

D'Amours also spent a summer at the PERFORM Centre, where she assisted on a research project at the Sleep, Cognition and Neuroimaging Laboratory.

"Their MRI machine allowed me to analyze brain structure, which is fascinating as a neuroscience student," she says.

Outside of the lab, D'Amours served as vice-president, External Affairs, at the Concordia Undergraduate Psychology Association, where she organized and managed relationships with a variety of organizations. She is particularly proud of a small bursary she helped establish for students who volunteer in labs.

"The association was a good way to get involved in the university and meet like-minded students," says D'Amours. "It also improved my leadership and teamwork abilities."

As she prepares to close one chapter and embark on another as a graduate student in a competitive field, D'Amours has one piece of advice for new students who want to maximize life at Concordia.

"Look beyond the classroom," she says. "Get involved and get out of your comfort zone!"

DONOR PROFILE

Cameron Tilson and Wendy Morse-Tilson



A LEGACY LIKE NO OTHER

There are dedicated Concordians, and then there are Concordians like Cameron Tilson, BSc 82.

Geology graduate. Staffer. Proud parent of two alumni (Jonathan Tilson, BA 18, and Emma Tilson, BFA 20). Donor to the Campaign for Concordia.

It is safe to say that Tilson — soon to be retired after 41 years of service to the university, the past 17 spent as assistant director, Institutional Planning and Analysis — has done his part to impact the Concordia community.

So, too, has his wife, Wendy Morse-Tilson. Together, they have recently taken steps — with the support of extended family and friends over the years — to endow a bursary fund, first established in 2009, in perpetuity.

The Laura Tilson Memorial Bursary was created in honour of the couple's daughter and second child, who died in 1994.

"She was born with a metabolic disease that was only diagnosed at six months of age," says Tilson, whose career at Concordia began as a geological technician in 1981. "Laura lived with us for almost three years. It was an extraordinary and challenging time."

After their loss, Cameron and Wendy gave to the institution where they had spent so much of their time with Laura, the Montreal Children's Hospital.

"We dealt with many departments at the Children's, and they were all fantastic," he says.

Eventually, though, the couple made the decision to create a more targeted and permanent legacy.

The Concordia bursary in Laura's name now provides \$1,000 in assistance to annually support one student with a physical

"They're all amazing and very determined individuals, and we've been so pleased to be able to help them."

or sensory disability. In order to qualify, applicants must be registered with the university's Access Centre for Students with Disabilities, which promotes equal access to education and a more inclusive campus environment and community.

The Tilsons have had the opportunity to meet several of their bursary recipients since it was first established. These encounters have meant a lot to the couple, says Cameron.

"It has always been wonderful to meet them over the years at various receptions. They're all amazing and very determined individuals, and we've been so pleased to be able to help them."

For current fine-arts student Emery Vanderburgh, the bursary came at an opportune time.

"Having to navigate full-time studies and my health, while feeling financially insecure, was a huge weight," she says. "Through this funding, I was able to dedicate myself to my creative practice without feeling guilty or worried."

Another recipient, Melissa Montour, BA 16, a member of the Mohawk community of Kahnawá:ke, was even inspired to establish a bursary of her own in support of Indigenous students at Concordia.

"This was wonderful to hear," says Tilson. "To think that our gesture could play a part in someone else's decision to pay it forward — it is both remarkable and heartwarming."



STUDENT PROFILE

Zohreh Hajiakhondi- Meybodi

BORN TO FLY

Parastoo — the Farsi word for swallow, a bird that symbolizes good luck and positive change in Persian folklore — is an apt nickname for Zohreh Hajiakhondi-Meybodi, whose soaring ambitions as a doctoral student have been empowered by donor support.

Hajiakhondi-Meybodi earned a master's degree in electrical engineering in her native Iran. And while she graduated at the top of her class, she struggled to find work that corresponded to her knowledge and expertise.

"The only way to achieve what I had always fought for was to leave my country and my beloved family," says Hajiakhondi-Meybodi, the recipient of a Carolyn and Brian Neysmith Graduate Scholarship. "I came to Canada with a heavy heart, but with a lot of hope as well."

That hope has been buoyed at the Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science, where Hajiakhondi-Meybodi is engaged in research on different topics, including Deep Neural Networks and Bluetooth Low Energy, a wireless personal area network technology with potential uses in health care, smart homes and many other sectors.

The PhD candidate has taken ample advantage of the range of services on Concordia's Sir George Williams Campus, from exercise classes at Le Gym to quiet time in the Zen Den located in the Engineering, Computer Science and Visual Arts Integrated Complex.

"Sometimes I go there in the middle of the day when I feel overwhelmed," Hajiakhondi-Meybodi says of the wellness hub for students.

"One of the most important features of the Concordia community is that it is very supportive. It has become like a big family for me."

What's more, she adds, when COVID-19 restricted class and lab time, the ability to easily borrow equipment from the R. Howard Webster Library was a lifesaver.

Hajiakhondi-Meybodi's time at Concordia has also been marked by valuable off-campus experiences. Three completed internships at technology firms have given her a wealth of industry exposure to help her spread her wings after graduation.

All of this, she notes, has taken place with the encouragement of new-found friends and like-minded academics. These include fellow Iranians like Hajiakhondi-Meybodi's doctoral supervisor, Arash Mohammadi, and his wife, Farnoosh Naderkhani. The couple are both faculty members with the Concordia Institute for Information Systems Engineering.

"As international students, we are far away from our family," Hajiakhondi-Meybodi says. "But one of the most important features of the Concordia community is that it is very supportive. It has become like a big family for me."

DONOR PROFILE

Rina Carlini



RISE AND SHINE

They triumphed over adversity. These words are frequently used to describe the odyssey some students face on the way to academic and professional success.

This was front of mind for Rina Carlini, BSc 93, and her husband, Tony Deluca (pictured), BComm 91, when they started a new award to help students persevere through exceptional challenges.

Established in 2022 with a gift of \$30,000, the Carlini-DeLuca Undergraduate RISE Award (Resilience In Science and Engineering Pathways to Success) will annually assist two students — one in science, one in engineering — who have overcome significant barriers to excel in the classroom.

The award, Carlini says, acknowledges how supportive Concordia was as she navigated a range of personal struggles to write her own story of resiliency.

“It started with the warm welcome I received after I transferred from McGill University, following a year off school, to find a new path as an undergraduate in chemistry. The faculty at Concordia, particularly Ann English and Raymond Zienius, and the staff at the Institute for Co-operative Education were incredibly kind and helpful.”

Carlini duly juggled work terms and a rigorous course schedule, and maintained a top grade-point average throughout.

This drew the notice of English, a research chair and distinguished professor emerita, who nominated her for the competitive and prestigious NSERC Centennial Scholarship for Doctoral Studies.

Carlini was one of 55 students across Canada to earn the lucrative federal grant in 1993. She went on to get her PhD in chemistry from the University of Waterloo — her many awards included the university’s Gold Medal for Outstanding

“My hope is that the RISE Award will allow science and engineering students to maximize their talents and we can endow it in perpetuity to strengthen the next generation. That’s the ultimate goal.”

Achievement, Doctoral Level — and has since forged a career as an innovation executive and venture builder in health technology, bioscience and cleantech.

None of this would have been possible, she stresses, without the confidence that her first alma mater gave her.

“Concordia was completely transformative for me,” says Carlini, who has run her own consultancy, the Optimal Innovation Group, as president and CEO since 2012.

“Without the university’s encouragement — and the love and support of my husband, Tony, who was there every step of the way — I’m not sure where I’d be now.”

Carlini is not just a proud alumna and donor. She also volunteers her time to serve on the advisory boards of the Gina Cody School and Concordia’s new School of Health.

“The university has a special place in my heart,” she says. “My hope is that the RISE Award will allow science and engineering students to maximize their talents and that, with additional support, we can endow it in perpetuity to strengthen the next generation. That’s the ultimate goal.”

To learn more about how you can support the RISE Award, visit concordia.ca/fundone.



DONOR PROFILE

Robert Wallace and friends of Tasha Wallace

COMMITTED TO EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

When Tasha Wallace (pictured), PhD 12, a faculty member with the Department of Management, died in a tragic scuba accident at the start of the 2017 fall term, the Concordia community memorialized her as “one of a kind” and “larger than life.”

“Tasha was the happiest person at the John Molson School of Business,” said Linda Dyer, Wallace’s department chair and thesis supervisor, and a catalyst behind the Tasha Wallace Graduate Teaching Award. “No question.”

Others who knew Wallace shared similar sentiments. Online tributes, of which there are many, describe an uncommonly vibrant and positive person who had boundless reserves of energy.

“I will always keep you in my heart as an inspiration to be a better scholar,” wrote one grief-stricken friend.

John Molson dean Anne-Marie Croteau remarks that Wallace was “always generous with her time and capable of finding the right words of encouragement.”

“We were lucky to have her as a caring and engaged member of the John Molson community,” Croteau adds. “We miss her.”

Robert Wallace says that the woman with whom he enjoyed more than 43 years of marriage had a special effect on people.

“It was not unusual for us to walk to or from the YMCA in downtown Montreal — Tasha loved sports and fitness — and encounter one of her students,” he recalls. “These exchanges were such a thrill for me, because I got to see first-hand how much she cared about them and how much they gravitated towards her.”

“Tasha just loved to teach. At the end of the day, she considered her students to be her legacy.”

A lifelong learner, Tasha Wallace’s journey to Concordia included a mathematics degree from the University of Waterloo and an MBA from McGill University. She also held key roles at Bell Canada, Canadian Industries Limited and Canadian National Railways.

Her doctoral thesis at John Molson earned Wallace the Joe Kelly Graduate Award. Named for a long-time management professor who passed away in 2013, the annual award is given to a PhD candidate whose thesis in management is judged to be of exceptional merit.

The Tasha Wallace Graduate Teaching Award now, too, encourages John Molson PhDs. Recipients thus far include: Najib Sahyoun, PhD 19; Raghid Al Hajj, PhD 21; Karen Naaman, PhD 21; Nelson Javier Dueñas Gil, MBA 16, PhD 22; and doctoral candidate Dandan Fang.

Kick-started with funds raised by Wallace’s colleagues through Shuffle, Concordia’s annual walkathon, the endowment in her name has since been bolstered by Robert and other donors, who together have contributed more than \$50,000.

All to support future teachers who display the kind of passion for the profession that his late wife was so beloved and admired for, he says.

“Tasha just loved to teach. At the end of the day, she considered her students to be her legacy.”

Concordians did it first!

In business, the arts, science and technology, public service and more, our community raised the bar in 2022.

KC Adams, BFA 98, was honoured with the inaugural ohpinamake Indigenous Art Prize from the University of Saskatchewan. Adams, an Anishinaabe, Inninew and British artist who lives in Winnipeg, was selected by a jury of cultural workers and community members to win the \$10,000 award.

Emilio Imbriglio, BComm 80, GrDip 82, the former president and CEO of Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton, was named inaugural executive fellow at the John Molson School of Business. The new role will allow Imbriglio to serve as a mentor to faculty and administrators, support promotional efforts, offer input on broad curriculum and program objectives, and strengthen links with the business community.

The launch of two innovative programs at Concordia — the Scientific Venture Program and PhD Career Connect — were celebrated as national firsts that will respectively support the journeys of research-based startup founders and postdoctoral candidates.

Three Concordia students won medals at the Beijing 2022 Winter Games:

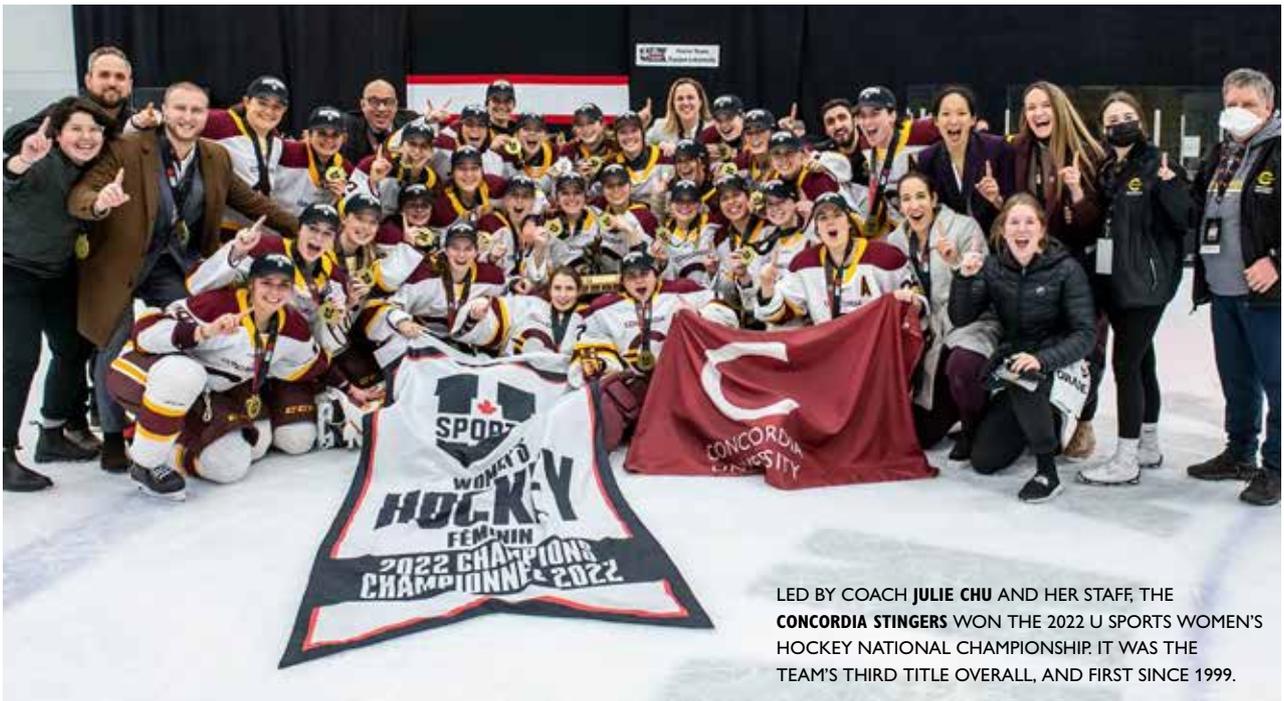
Marion Thénault (Olympic bronze), **Anton Jacobs-Webb** (Paralympics silver) and **Pascal Dion** (Olympic gold).



THE WORK OF HISTORIAN **DOROTHY WILLIAMS**, BA 84, MA 89, WAS INCLUDED AS PART OF THE INAUGURAL EXHIBIT OF MONTREAL'S AFROMUSÉE, THE FIRST MUSEUM IN QUEBEC DEDICATED TO AFRICAN DIASPORIC HERITAGE AND CULTURE.

Sage Duquette, BA 22, became Concordia's first McCall MacBain Scholar. The political science graduate, who has chosen to study law at McGill University, was among a class of 20 selected from a pool of close to 700 applicants across Canada.





LED BY COACH **JULIE CHU** AND HER STAFF, THE **CONCORDIA STINGERS** WON THE 2022 U SPORTS WOMEN'S HOCKEY NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP. IT WAS THE TEAM'S THIRD TITLE OVERALL, AND FIRST SINCE 1999.

Art Volt, a sales-and-rental service that also serves as a platform to bolster the careers of recent fine-arts graduates, was launched by the Faculty of Fine Arts. A first in Canada, the initiative was made possible thanks to support from the Peter N. Thomson Family Trust, which donated \$5.6 million to Concordia in 2019.

Graduate students **Emily Ah-Yen** and **Cole Dougherty** were the first recipients of the Nadia Chaudhri Wingspan Award. Designed to encourage neuroscientists from underrepresented backgrounds, the award was established by the late Nadia Chaudhri, a beloved Department of Psychology professor and researcher who succumbed to ovarian cancer in 2021 at the age of 43.



Members of **Space Concordia** set a world record when they developed and successfully fired *StarSailor*, a rocket engine. Learn more about the student association's exploits on page 12.



Discover more of what Concordia achieved first in Montreal, Quebec, Canada and the world: concordia.ca/concordiafirsts.

Donor generosity propels Space Concordia to new heights

GRUPE SWAGELOK QUÉBEC PROVIDES VITAL SUPPORT FOR RECORD-SETTING ROCKET PROJECT



Space Concordia students (back row, from left) Hudson Pastuszko, Alexandre Palamodov, Intisar Salam, Lâm Tùng and Benjamin St. Laurent Recoura, and (front row) Alex Pugh, Omar Nawaz and Oleg Khalimonov

When you're a group of university students trying to build — in the basement of Concordia's Henry F. Hall Building — Canada's largest, most advanced and powerful rocket ever, any offer of help is more than welcome.

For Space Concordia, the multidisciplinary Concordia student society that challenges its members to develop space and aerospace projects, a \$37,000 gift-in-kind from the specialized industrial equipment supplier Groupe Swagelok Québec was a force multiplier.

The latest support to the Campaign for Concordia: Next-Gen Now meant the high-performance space and aerospace squad could build an essential test stand for their rocket engine, a beast that produces at least 9,000 pounds of thrust — more powerful than the first Space X rocket engine. A successful test in the

summer of 2021 set a world record: the largest rocket engine ever designed, built and fired up by students.

"I know the song," says André Ouellet, president of Swagelok Québec. "I know how tough it is to get some funding, some parts," especially in something as complex as rocketry. For Ouellet, making the donation of various bits of precision equipment — valves, fittings, pressure regulators, gauges and flexible hoses, as well as technical support — was a way of sharing in the students' passion, daring and dreams.

As an engineering student at Université Laval and then a management student at Université de Sherbrooke, Ouellet was familiar with the uphill climb students face when seeking funding for ambitious projects. He says he's "a passionate guy" who appreciated the students' daring and ingenuity.



Inspired by a David Bowie song, Trailer Tom is the mobile rocket-engine test stand built by Space Concordia using materials and equipment from Swagelok Québec's \$37,000 gift-in-kind

'What they're doing is super complex'



André Ouellet is the president of Groupe Swagelok Québec.

Space Concordia's motto — *ad astra per doctrinam*, or "to the stars through teaching" — captures that spirit of science-infused passion for space that has inspired generations of astronauts, engineers, stargazers and pop-culture space icons, from Carl Sagan to Neil deGrasse Tyson.

The difference between your average *Star Trek* cosplayer and the group's 200 members being, of course, that they're actual rocket scientists. The group's flagship rocket is called *StarSailor*.

Ouellet doesn't say yes to every student organization that comes calling. But from the start, the Space Concordia rocket project captured his imagination. "Wow!" he recalls thinking. "That's cool! It's right in my world, I think I can make a little bit of a difference for these students. I think it will build their confidence. What they're doing is super complex."

Ouellet started working for Swagelok Québec in 1994. He was just out of university and there was a recession on. He worked as a technical representative, moving up the ranks before stepping away in 2000 to work as regional sales director for what was then Gaz Métro, until 2008. He then returned to Swagelok as vice-president of sales and marketing before becoming director-general and then president.

The company is an independent distributor and custom fabricator of fluid system products, assemblies and

services for the oil and gas, chemical and petrochemical, semiconductor, and transportation industries generated by a company of the same name based in the United States and in business throughout the world.

As for *StarSailor*, it might be the first thing Concordia puts into space, says Oleg Khalimonov, a mechanical engineering undergrad who is team captain on Space Concordia's rocketry division and its chief rocket designer. Khalimonov has been immersed in the project since it began in 2019, a year after the team won first place in two categories at a competition that included student engineers from Stanford, MIT, Caltech and McGill.

StarSailor is designed as a suborbital rocket, so it can't put anything into orbit. But it does have a 65-kilogram payload capacity and is designed to travel 135 kilometres up into space (the International Space Station orbits at about 400 kilometres).

About 500 students have been involved in the project, Khalimonov says. The team has not only built a test stand and the 15-metre-tall, 800-kilogram rocket itself, but also Big Ben, a 25-metre-tall mobile launch platform and tower that will let the team launch from almost anywhere. And a launch, possibly as early as the summer of 2023, is in the works.

"The generous donation from Swagelok helped us build the world's most advanced student rocket-engine test stand," says Khalimonov.

DONOR PROFILE

Paul Hwang



INSPIRED BY A MOTHER'S SACRIFICE

A nurse on the wrong side of Mao's Communist revolution risks it all to flee China and find refuge in Hong Kong and, later, Singapore.

Her efforts to safeguard her six children — only four of whom survive infancy — change the fortunes of her descendants in ways she can scarcely imagine.

This story is at the heart of a considerable planned gift made to the Campaign for Concordia by Toronto neurologist Paul Hwang, BSc 70.

Hwang arrived in Montreal on October 2, 1966, to attend Loyola College, which merged with Sir George Williams University to form Concordia less than a decade later.

By the end of his first term, he was awarded a full scholarship for his stellar academic performance. This kind of support is what Hwang wants to honour with his own bequest to establish a scholarship — named after professor Stanley Drummond, Concordia's "father of biology" — for top science students who plan to attend medical school.

"As a foreign student, I was given an opportunity to be successful. How could I not provide the same opportunity now?" asks Hwang.

When he graduated in 1970, Hwang was awarded Quebec's Minister of Education Silver Medal, given to the student with the best overall average in the sciences.

"It was a big moment for me. I was the first to come to Canada and make it. Loyola opened so many doors."

"It was a big moment for me. I was the first to come to Canada and make it. Loyola opened so many doors."

Hwang went on to share the Williams Prize in Medicine at McGill University as one of the top students in the faculty. Next, he obtained his MSc from the University of Toronto.

Over the course of his subsequent career, Hwang made tremendous strides in the field of neurology. His honours include the Herbert Jasper Prize, given by the Canadian Society of Clinical Neurophysiologists.

None of this would have been possible, he stresses, without his family. Hwang and his wife, Wai Chin Hwang, a McGill science graduate, have been together for five decades and the couple's five daughters — Christine, Irene, Pauline, Amy and Julie — were all gifted students who went on to become successful professionals. Seven grandchildren also keep the Hwangs busy these days.

Hwang, a devout Catholic, often thinks about his late mother in his daily devotions and reflects on the desperate choices she made a lifetime ago.

"Despite her personal setbacks, her focus on higher education is what made the difference," he says. "She has been the greatest influence in my life."

Alexandre Franchi



BLURRING THE LINES BETWEEN ART, GAMES AND SOCIAL WORK

Graduate student Alexandre Franchi, GrDip 95, is the co-writer and director of *Happy Face*, an award-winning 2018 film about a support group for people with disfiguring facial conditions. The semi-autobiographical drama features a 19-year-old protagonist coping with his mother's cancer surgery and its severe impact on her physical appearance.

Franchi's film was shown at youth employment centres across Quebec, where social workers found that its themes of self-acceptance and resilience resonated with clients, many of whom had dropped out of high school.

The Wild Hunt, a film Franchi made in 2009 that won the Toronto International Film Festival's Best Canadian First Feature Award, was inspired by his passion for role-playing games, or RPG.

These interests — filmmaking, supporting marginalized people and RPG — prompted Franchi to pursue graduate studies at Concordia. The two-year Master of Design program he enrolled in allows students to broaden their knowledge of design in the fields of visual communication, the built environment, interaction design and design studies.

Franchi's thesis brought together high-school dropouts in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, for a collaborative project to examine trauma by combining RPG, design and documentary filmmaking.

Named *Quest for Communitas*, the project, which melds performer and observer, suspends social norms and welcomes unpredictable results, was cathartic for all involved, he says.

With Quebec's high-school graduation rates among the lowest in Canada, Franchi hopes his research will

“With people from all faculties working there, it felt like a natural habitat for what I was exploring. The environment is playful and conducive to trial and error.”

provide new tools for educators and social workers while encouraging funders to invest in more novel initiatives.

“My artistic goal is to make films that will destabilize, stir and alter audiences,” adds Franchi, a Peter N. Thomson Family Graduate Scholarship recipient. “The film itself will be created for other struggling young people. For that reason, it will be irreverent, funny and not shy away from making fun of ourselves — because humour unites us all.”

At Concordia, Franchi appreciated the environment at TAG — the university's Technoculture, Art and Games multidisciplinary research centre that brings together scholars, artists, designers, engineers and students.

“With people from all faculties working there, it felt like a natural habitat for what I was exploring,” he says. “The environment is playful and conducive to trial and error.”

Franchi has finished his research and will soon present some of his footage at the Master of Design program's annual showcase. Although his film is still a work in progress, he warns visitors not to expect a typical screening.

“I plan to make it quite interactive,” Franchi says. “In the spirit of reciprocity, I might invite people to do outrageous things or show vulnerability, in order to better understand the youth involved with this project.”

DONOR PROFILE

Adedotun and Opeyemi Sali



GAME-CHANGERS FOR STEM

A new scholarship established by Adedotun (Ade) Sali, MASc 13, and Opeyemi Sali, MEng 13, has emboldened Black students enrolled in key STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines at Concordia.

Started by the Toronto-based couple with a gift of \$7,500 in 2022, the annual Adedotun and Opeyemi Sali Scholarship in Computer Science and Software Engineering is open to second-year Black undergraduates at Concordia's Gina Cody School.

Ade, a cybersecurity senior manager at PwC Canada, and Opeyemi, a global security operations manager at Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, describe the initiative as a way to pay it forward.

"As past recipients of financial support ourselves, we want to inspire the next generation in tech," says Ade.

What the Salis have done will also help address a systemic scarcity, the cause of which has been tricky to diagnose because of a lack of data — Canada has not yet made it a national practice to collect facts and statistics about education through the lens of race.

If this changes, however, the analysis of such data could help to encourage more diversity in STEM, an imperative to both grow Canada's economy and respond to many of society's most urgent challenges.

That such a scholarship has been put forth by two former international students who came to Concordia to seek advanced degrees in information systems security is notable.

When the Salis graduated from one of Nigeria's

"As past recipients of financial support ourselves, we want to inspire the next generation in tech."

premier state schools — Ladoko Akintola University of Technology in the city of Ogbomosho, Oyo State — with BTech degrees in computer science, they were decisive about what kind of future they wanted for themselves.

"It was a crucial time in our lives because we were a few months into our marriage and embarked on this new chapter," says Ade. "We did quite a lot of research on Montreal and Concordia. By the time we arrived, we felt quite prepared to do what it took to improve our education and professional prospects."

Armed with master's degrees in a critical field — IT security — the Salis have since charted significant careers. Before she accepted her current position with Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts in 2021, Opeyemi, among other roles, worked as a security consultant for Morgan Stanley and held various roles over the course of five years at Deloitte Canada.

Ade's resumé also includes a five-year stint at Deloitte, where he served as a cybersecurity manager. He joined PwC in 2020.

The Salis are now thrilled to be in a position to give back.

"The ability to impact someone else's life — someone who you do not know — is incredibly powerful," says Opeyemi.



GLOBAL OUTLOOK WITH A COMMUNITY FOCUS

For Aiden Cyr, BA 22, community is everything.

Born in St. Norbert, Manitoba, a suburb of Winnipeg, the alumnus and Schwarzman Scholar is a proud member of the Manitoba Métis Federation who has sought to broaden his worldview through exposure to different places and cultures.

This led Cyr to enrol at the School of Community and Public Affairs (SCPA) in 2018.

“Concordia had a practical approach, with students tackling complex policy issues in small classroom settings, taught by practitioners and academics from around the world,” Cyr recalls. “My classmates were activists, grassroots organizers, aspiring lawyers and politicians. People had a lot of different reasons for being in the program.”

In the library and meeting rooms of the SCPA building on Sir George Williams Campus, Cyr and his fellow students studied and planned activist campaigns, including a strike against unpaid internships.

The First Peoples Studies program offered through the SCPA also made Cyr feel more at home — “I could hear the drumming and singing in class,” he says — and demonstrated Concordia’s commitment to Indigenous scholarship.

He also fondly remembers the special graduation ceremony put on by Concordia’s Otsenhákta Student Centre, a resource for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students.

“It was incredible having this space for times when I missed my home and my culture,” he says.

“It was incredible having this space for times when I missed my home and my culture.”

As the recipient of a Chadha Family Scholarship, Cyr also benefited from donor support that enabled him to better focus on his coursework and to find time to enjoy extracurriculars like intramural basketball and volleyball.

Off campus, Cyr worked as a parliamentary research assistant for the Senate of Canada, served as a National Youth Ambassador for the Moose Hide Campaign — an Indigenous-led movement to raise awareness about the perils of domestic and gender-based violence — and travelled to Madrid to talk about climate change with global experts at COP25 in 2019.

Now, as one of a few hundred students from around the world to be awarded a prestigious Schwarzman Scholarship, Cyr is in Beijing to complete a one-year master’s program in global affairs at Tsinghua University. He’s the first Indigenous Canadian in the history of the program.

“If I’m going to impact the world in the way that I want to, I need a better understanding of China,” he says. “Especially in the political realm, there is little chance that any work I do in the future would not focus heavily on the country.”

Your support matters

Hear from some of our thankful students and recent graduates who benefited from donor support.

“In June 2022, I proudly attended Concordia’s graduation ceremony as the first person in my family to obtain a bachelor’s degree. Your support showed me I had the right to claim my path. You inspired me to push through tough times and made me believe in myself.”

– **CINDY BALAN** / BA 22, current Master of Arts student, recipient of Tri-Agency Canada Graduate Scholarship (SSHRC)

“Because of this financial support, I was able to come to Canada to study and fully devote myself to research on emerging contaminants. I hope I can improve our ecological environment through my efforts. I would like to become a university professor and influence more people to work for the environment.”

– **XIAOHAN YANG** / PhD candidate (Civil Engineering), Miriam Aaron Roland Graduate Fellow

“I was president of a student-run club called Stronger than Stigma, which advocates for mental-health awareness and literacy. This experience was very empowering as I had the opportunity to plan events and bring students together who needed socialization post-pandemic.”

– **ALEXANDRA MELTZER** / BA 22, recipient of the Ann Kerby Scholarship for Students with Disabilities

“As a full-time artist, performer, facilitator, educator and youth mentor, my master’s degree will advance my capacity to contribute my voice as a 2S Métis, which is an opportunity many of my ancestors and relatives were never given.”

– **MOE CLARK** / Master of Arts candidate and Power Corporation of Canada Graduate Fellow

“Friendships have been the best part of being a student athlete at Concordia. There’s something really special about working towards a common goal, and then achieving and celebrating it together. We really are like a family.”

– **OLIVIA HALE** / Undergraduate, John Molson School of Business, and captain, Concordia Stingers women’s varsity hockey team

“Receiving this scholarship has been so beneficial to me, both financially and psychologically. I love to be in university. To get the chance to learn about a wide range of subjects both within and outside of the classroom is for me, one of the great joys of existence.”

– **HARLEY MARTIN** / Undergraduate, Faculty of Arts and Science



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1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W.
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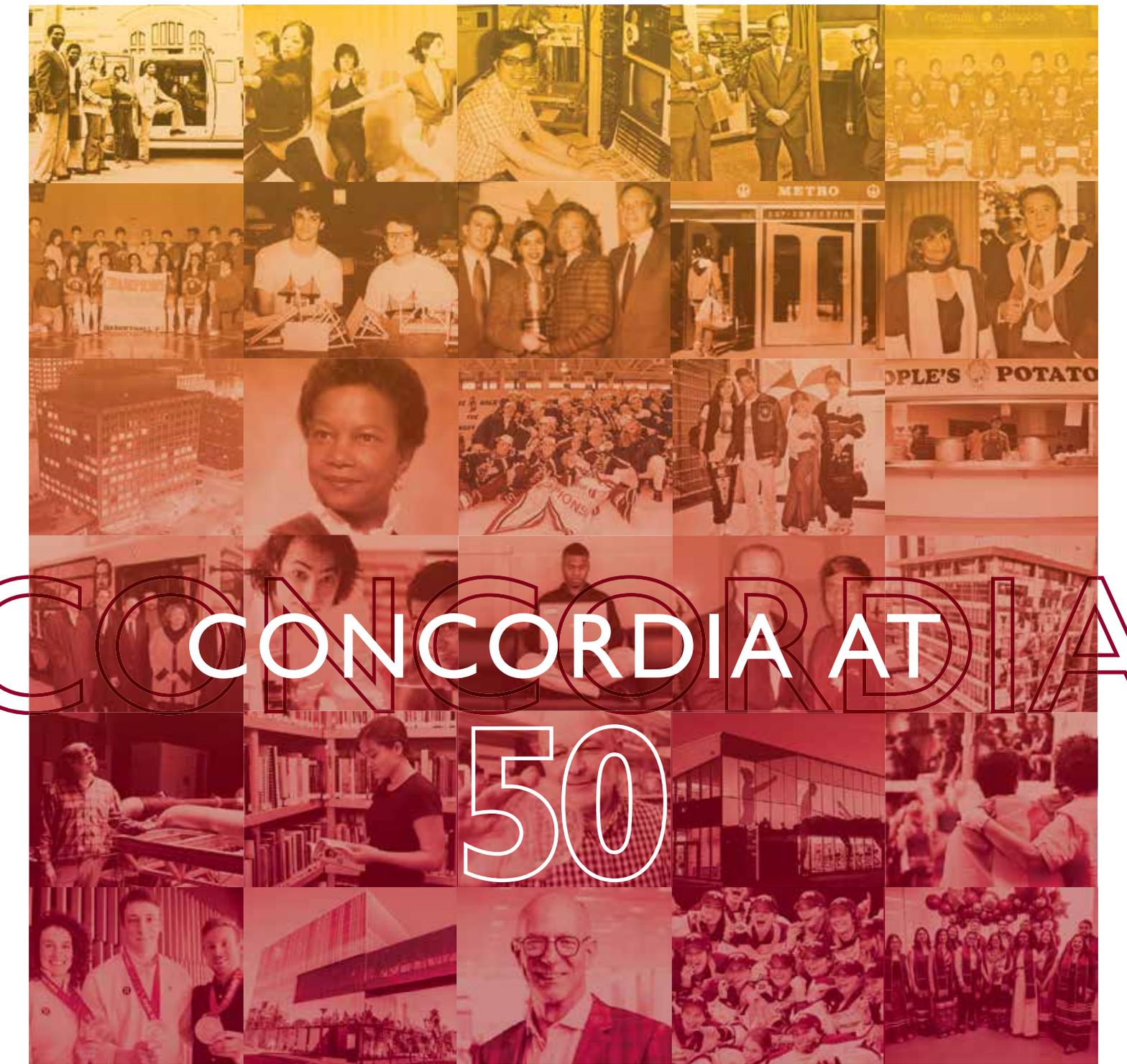
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Before we celebrate our fifth decade in 2024-25,
we want to hear from you!

- ▶ **Were you** part of Concordia's first graduating class of 1975?
- ▶ **Do you** have any Concordia-related memories to share from 1974-75?
- ▶ **Is there** a Concordia professor who helped shape your journey?

Write to magazine@concordia.ca to tell us your unique story.