CONCORDIA YOUTH ENGAGEMENT OFFICE

a proud member of Actua

Annual report summary 2025

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Focused on inspiring next-generation leaders and innovators, Concordia's Youth Engagement Office provides engaging programs for people under 18 to develop confidence, critical thinking and employability skills.

This year, Concordia's Youth Engagement Office successfully supported four core programs:

1. **Finding Urban Nature (F.U.N.)** is a community-outreach and environmental-education initiative that brings young people — especially those from lower-income or underserved neighbourhoods — into Montreal's informal green spaces. These are nature-rich areas within the city that are not necessarily formal parks but still host biodiversity and provide ecological value. Participants connect with the environment, develop a sense of stewardship, and learn about ecology and sustainability in a tangible way.

   Program highlights
   - Reached **650+ youth** and 100+ community members.
   - Delivered weekly **Wild Wednesdays** on campus and in local green spaces (30–45 youth/week).
   - Introduced **Nature Workshops**, bringing programming directly to community centres.
   - Ran **weekly bat walks** to promote citizen science.
   - **New partnerships** with: Climate Emergency Committee (Concordia), Hope Gardens, Family Care Collective, BAM Studio Camps and Girl Guides of Canada.
   - Demonstrated **measurable change in participants' comfort with outdoor environments and curiosity about ecology.**

2. **Science and Engineering Summer Camps** offer youth aged five to 17 the opportunity to deepen their understanding of science, technology, engineering, artificial intelligence and more through hands-on activities and experiments. Staffed by experienced university students and educators with backgrounds in counselling and teaching, the camps spark curiosity and deepen campers' understanding of STEM fields.

Program highlights

- Reached **965 youth**, exceeding capacity with **16 additional groups waitlisted**.
  - Added **eight specialized streams**, including AI, engineering design, green energy and robotics.
- Delivered activities in collaboration with:
  - **Volt-Age**: green energy curriculum
  - **Applied AI Institute (AI2)**: AI and ethics modules
  - **Concordia Library's Sandbox Makerspace and 4TH SPACE**: prototyping and public programming
  - Expanded links with recreation centres and municipal partners.

3. **Girls Summer Engineering and Technology Program (GirlSET)** offers girls aged 14 to 17 an immersive introduction to the world of STEM. The mission is to inspire and empower young women to explore careers in engineering and computer science, equipping them with tools to drive innovation and make a difference in society. Participants are mentored by engineering students and faculty members from the Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science. Through hands-on activities, they develop problem-solving, analytical and design skills while exploring such topics as game creation, structural engineering, AI, chemical engineering and software engineering.

    Program highlights

    • Served **40 participants** from 32 schools and CEGEPs (including four international students).

    • Delivered a **two-week intensive immersion** into 10 engineering disciplines, led by faculty and students.

    • Combined **technical learning with mentorship**, prototyping and exploration of AI fundamentals.

    • Culminated in a **showcase of youth-designed engineering prototypes**.

4. **STEM Squad** helps inspire a passion for STEM subjects among elementary and secondary students in Montreal.

The program was created and is run by a group of Concordia faculty and students who are passionate about STEM and eager to share that enthusiasm with children and youth. Believing that STEM is for everyone, they organize outreach activities that engage students of all ages and backgrounds.

STEM Squad offers a range of programming and has implemented various curricula in different educational contexts, including underserved communities.

At the elementary level, they have taught coding and robotics to young children and developed a multi-level curriculum in computational thinking and engineering. They also collaborate with les Scientifines, a social services organization promoting STEM to girls aged eight to 17 from underprivileged urban areas in Montreal.

Program highlights
- Programming delivered smoothly and consistently, with strong school and community uptake.
- New partnership with Côte-des-Neiges Black Community Association to run fall sessions.
- Workshops delivered at St. Jude Elementary School attracted interest from other schools and organizations.
- New micro:bit curriculum developed to introduce hands-on computing and robotics foundations.

Together these four programs have reached more than 1,397 youth across Montreal.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

In addition to these hands-on engagement activities, the Youth Engagement Office participated in major community science events significantly expanding our outreach.

At the 39th edition of **Exposcience**, a collaboration between Concordia and the Pointe-Claire Cultural Centre, our team delivered interactive science activities to 1,200 children and families. We also contributed to the annual **Eurêka! Festival**, a three-day science and technology event organized by L'Île du Savoir, where Concordia supports registration and coordinates participation from our Space Concordia student group. Through this festival, we reached over 5,000 youths with engaging, hands-on demonstrations.

Together, these large-scale events connected us with more than 6,200 additional participants, amplifying our visibility and strengthening our role as a leader in community-based STEM outreach.

INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION

The Concordia Youth Engagement Office has built strong collaborative ties with many of the university's leading research initiatives, including:

Volt-Age: Canada's number one electrification research program

- Co-developed green energy modules for science and engineering camp.
- Provided funding to support barrier-free access to programming.
- To lead a dedicated green energy camp stream in 2026.

Applied AI Institute: unites AI development by coordinating research across Concordia's four faculties in collaboration with business, civil society, governments, and other researchers

- Co-designed AI ethics and digital literacy workshops for youth.
- Submitted joint NSERC PromoScience proposal.
- Exploring outreach to Northern Quebec and Indigenous communities.

Concordia Library Technology Sandbox and 4TH SPACE: offers space, equipment and community for building technology projects

- Hosted prototyping workshops, hands-on design sessions and public-facing activities.

Office of Community Engagement and SHIFT Centre for Social Transformation: a transformative and collaborative ecosystem where diverse people, communities and organizations work together to address major societal challenges and create a more just, inclusive and broadly prosperous Montreal.

- Organized events and training on justice-based youth engagement.
- Hosted a **Fishbowl Conversation**: "What does youth engagement look like in practice?"

INSTRUCTOR EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING

The Youth Engagement Office undergraduate student instructors coordinate and lead on-campus and in-community STEM programming. They also act as diverse role models, motivating and inspiring youth to pursue STEM by sharing their lived experiences. To help them in their role, instructors took part in Actua instructor training with modules including gender equity, Indigenous worldviews and education and an introduction to Actua, Canada's largest STEM learning organization.

Training was delivered through a mix of self-paced online modules and in-person discussions.

- Instructors reported:
  - Modules were "useful, insightful and relevant beyond their role."
  - The accessibility module showed great potential, and adding more videos and interactive materials would further enhance engagement.

Impact: Culturally relevant STEM education

The new partnerships with **Black Boys Code Montreal Chapter** and **Côte-des-Neiges Black Community Association** addressed a clear community need for culturally relevant STEM education for Black youth. Concordia provided staffing, labs, technical support and mentorship, enabling the launch of a highly successful coding program.

- Workshops introduced machine learning, HTML, robotics and coding fundamentals.
- The partnership directly aligned with principle of creating safe, culturally relevant, identity-affirming learning environments.

Youth Engagement Office key successes

Created in 2025, the Concordia Youth Engagement Office began to amalgamate youth outreach activities that were happening across the university. In this inaugural year, key successes included:

- Significant growth in new community partnerships, especially serving Black youth.
- Strong interdisciplinary collaborations with Concordia research institutes (Volt-Age, Institute for Applied AI).
- High engagement in barrier-free programs reaching underserved youth.
- Expanded programming for digital literacy, hands-on coding and AI readiness.
- Strengthened institutional collaboration (Library Technology Sandbox, 4TH SPACE, SHIFT Centre).
- Successful launch of the Black Boys Code Montreal Chapter enrolling 40+ youth in the first cohort.

Testimonials

- *"GirlSET has shown me that I don't have to be in a lab to be in STEM."*
- *"The variety of subjects was amazing — both theoretical concepts and real-world applications."*
- *"This camp taught me so much about STEM and university life."*
- *"Hands-on experience, not just presentations."*
- *"Thank you! This opportunity was amazing!"*
- *"I loved the exposure to real-life projects and applications."*

A PROUD MEMBER OF THE ACTUA NETWORK

Actua is a leading Canadian science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) youth outreach organization. Each year, the Actua network engages more than 500,000 youth in 600 communities across Canada in transformative STEM learning experiences that build critical skills and confidence.

A network member of **actüa**

2025-26 Actual national funders:

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CANADA'S NEXT-GEN UNIVERSITY

Concordia is a next-generation university, continually reimagining the future of higher education. Established in 1974, Concordia is located in vibrant and multicultural Montreal, North America's favourite student city. Its two campuses are situated in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal, on the traditional lands and waters of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation. Concordia is the top-ranked university in North America founded within the last 50 years and among the most innovative in its approach to experiential learning and cross-functional research.

The university annually registers 46,000 diverse and engaged students in its Faculty of Arts and Science, John Molson School of Business, Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science and Faculty of Fine Arts, and in Concordia Continuing Education. Named third on *Forbes'* Canada's Best Employers 2025, the university employs more than 6,700 faculty and staff and has over 262,000 alumni worldwide. The university annually secures nearly $61.9 million in sponsored research income.

Concordia's strategic directions set out a vision for the future and exemplify a daring and transformative outlook to some of the most important issues of our time. The university strives to be forward-looking, agile and responsive while remaining deeply rooted in the community and globally networked.

The university's student body includes over 36,400 undergraduate students and 9,600 graduate students in over 200 grad programs, more than 10,000 international students from some 150 countries and 3,000-plus Co-op students. Concordia maintains formal ties with 181 institutions in 39 countries.

Concordia is committed to decolonization and Indigenization and being sustainably responsible.

For more information, visit **concordia.ca**.

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