

# 2010 Congress:

# Concordia gets kudos

Record turnout of Academics may have overshadowed student presence

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News editor

Just under 9,000 delegates flooded the halls and classrooms of Concordia last week as the university played host to the biggest ever Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in its 79-year history.

Comprising roughly 1,500 events, Congress showcased original research on socially and culturally relevant issues in speeches, lectures and research presentations. Congress also played home to a groundbreaking Accord on the education of indigenous peoples in Canada. It was developed between leading representatives of First Nations communities and the Association of Canadian Deans of Education.

Other highlight of the research presented included talks on the evolving perception of pornography and sexual representation in the digital era, and smart fabric where the wearer's physical and emotional state triggers the transfer of personalized memory back to the wearer.

The 2010 Congress was undeniably a massive undertaking for the university. "We had 100 full-time staff working on it, some as long as two years," said Chris Mota, Concordia's director of media relations. She added that there were 100 students and 100 volunteers working on the event.

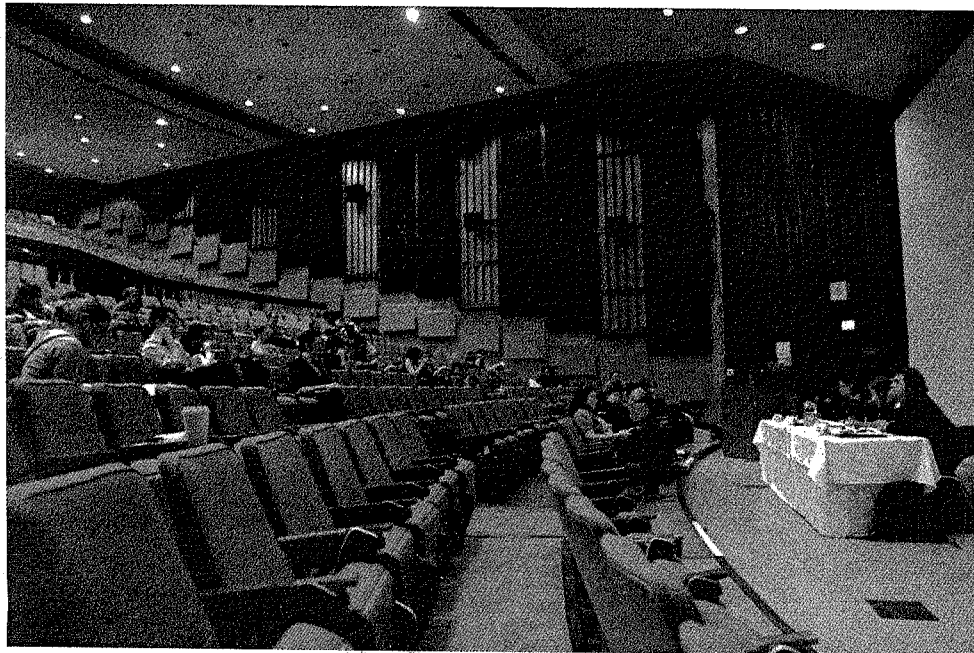
While Congress did cost Concordia some money, Mota called hosting the event an investment. She noted all the good will the university experienced from those who attended. She also said that because some more members of general public got a first-hand look at the school they otherwise may not have had, "they might be considering [Concordia] in the future as somewhere they may want to attend or send their children."

Congress was also an illustration of modern technology: anybody could follow the event on Twitter; a ticker text project had participants submitting brief messages onto a traditional stock ticker; and Congress actually partnered up with Rable.ca to record essentially all the events so that anyone not in attendance could watch them online later.

While the event went off seemingly without a hitch, some expressed concerns about the accessibility of Congress to students, particularly in relation to the costs of attending the event.

Dimitrios Koulis, a fourth-year undergraduate, volunteered for the Canadian Sociological Association throughout Congress, which allowed him to see many of the events at no expense. "They want to make sure that students are able to come to Congress and they know that the cost isn't necessarily affordable for a lot of students, especially if they're working part-time minimum wage, or doing other obligations with school full-time," Koulis said of the Association. "So the whole idea was that students could volunteer at the [Association's] table three hours at a time and this way they could pay for the association fees and fees for the congress," a sum that he said probably amounted to roughly \$150.

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The H-110 was one of many venues used for the 1,500 events in the week-long Congress. Archival photo

Koulis admitted, however, that while many students were in attendance, a lot of these were students from outside Montreal and in comparison with the number of graduates, or even undergraduates at Concordia, the student attendance was relatively low. He attributed the problem at least partly to what he saw as a lack of advertising. "Maybe it wasn't as much advertised. It's also one of those things that if you're not involved in your own department or connected with other aspects of Concordia you may miss a lot."

Other students reiterated their lack of information about the event and just how big it was.

Koulis also acknowledged that cost may have played a role, an issue the university could have helped solve.

"What they could have done is even help pay for part of the Congress for students," Koulis suggested. "Not necessarily pay for the whole amount but pay for 20 per cent or 30 per cent just to help alleviate the cost in some ways. Especially since it was a big Congress event for Concordia, why not get

their own students to come to this event also?"

Still, Mota saw the positive role Congress played for the students involved. She said a lot of graduate students who chose academic careers were able to present their papers to an audience of academics. She even pointed out that certain communications students got to work as interns in the media relations department to accommodate the event.

Overall the response seems to have been very positive. Like many of those in attendance, Koulis cred-

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Dimitrios Koulis,  
undergraduate student

its the university for what he described as an amazing experience, specifically in getting to meet people within the academic field. Also, from his discussions with people who attended past conferences, Koulis said everyone felt Concordia's organization was much better than past events, with all facilities running smoothly and help or orientation readily at hand if needed.

Mota experienced the same reaction. "Everything I have heard was that it was a huge success," she said. "I did not hear one negative thing."

9,000

delegates and academics who attended the Congress

1,500

Number of events including keynote speeches, lectures and research presentations

300

200 volunteers, 100 full-time staff required to prepare and run the one-week event

LOTS

cups of coffee consumed from urns found on each floor of the Hall building