

# WHO WE ARE

The CSU Advocacy Centre is a service that is centered on students' needs and interests as defined by students. We strive to support students in their academic endeavors and exercising their rights on campus and in their everyday lives.

We believe that students should be informed, empowered and supported in exercising their rights both in and beyond their academic environments. We are here to provide assistance to students who feel that they have been treated unfairly on campus or to help students by informing them of University policies that impact both their academic and non-academic pursuits on campus.

In addition, the Centre provides representation services to students as defined under the Academic Code of Conduct or the Code of Rights and Responsibilities. Advocates are here to listen to students and to address their concerns in a proactive manner. We also advocate a student-centered perspective on issues that impact undergraduate students both within and outside the University.

## What We Do: Serving Student Academics and Rights

The CSU Advocacy Centre organizes the services it offers to incoming students into six categories.

### **Academic Misconduct**

This category refers to charges relating to offences listed in the Academic Code of Conduct. Advocates evaluate the alleged charges and develop case strategies with the student. They provide information and guidance throughout the process, as well as representation at interviews and hearings for cases falling under the Code.

The bulk of the Centre's work revolves around this type of case. It remains one of the most complex and demanding aspect of our mandate. As such, extended training is required before the Advocate is able to handle such cases.

### **Code of Rights and Responsibilities**

This category refers to cases in which a student has been alleged to violate the Code of Rights and Responsibilities (CORR). This Code outlines the processes for dealing with case of harassment, discrimination, violence, and sexual assault. Given the seriousness of the infractions, the possible sanctions as stated in the CORR can include suspension and expulsion.

## **Hearings**

We assist and represent students facing disciplinary action by the university or involved in high level complaints against members of the Concordia community.

## **Student Requests**

This category refers to official requests to the university by students for special cases and needs. The Centre informs students about the various regulations dealing with such cases, helps with the construction of student requests, evaluates options available in various cases and advocates on behalf of the student.

The complexity of the case may in some cases be due to the serious impacts of the decision (e.g. failing grade, loss of visa or expulsion). Other times it may be a case that requires contact with several offices at the university.

## **Complaints and General Consultations**

This category refers to all forms of complaints involving students and other members of the Concordia community. Advocates help students file complaints or defend themselves against accusations.

The Advocacy Centre is a significant resource for students who are confused about how to maneuver within the bureaucracy of Concordia University or students who would simply like to inform themselves about their rights and responsibilities as a member of the Concordia community.

## **Student Interests**

Over the course of the last academic year, the CSU Advocacy Center has seen significant changes and embarked on new initiatives. Most notable among these changes is the servicing of Concordia graduate students. Also, the Advocacy Center has embarked on a number of new projects and initiatives to better serve Concordia students Academics, Interests and Rights. These include, but are not limited to:

### **Contracted Merger with the GSA Advocacy Center**

This year we continued into our two-year merger with GSA Advocacy Center to offer our expertise to Concordia graduate students. We helped many graduate students with a wide variety of issues. Since the office set up had been finalized and we were able to hire and train a GSA Advocate to cover the majority of required hours, whereas a high portion of the work had been referred to the CSU Advocacy Centre manager in the previous year. The official hiring and training of a Graduate student advocate provided a much more efficient service to students and allowed the Graduate Advocacy Service to further expand its reach

and services offered to students. We've also recently renewed the contract to provide advocacy services for the GSA for the next 2 years.

- We established new collaborative and research initiatives.
- We developed a new body of information on graduate programs. This has proven beneficial for undergraduate students looking for information on graduate programs offered by Concordia and looking for assistance when applying for Master's programs.
- We have developed more training angled at handling graduate cases and were able to further expand on our services offered to graduate students. Many of these cases involve informal academic resolution for students who are encountering problems in their programs or are having trouble graduating after working on their graduate degrees for several years.

### **Workshop Event – Career Planning Strategies**

One of our employees has been preparing this series of workshops that focuses on career strategizing. This is an interesting project that is directly applicable to students and providing some guidance on how to use time at university to strategize for the future workforce. There is also a focus on networking and marketing skills which play an essential role in career success. Maria Stawnichy, an employee studying Human Relations, received specialized training in these areas and will be delivering the workshop alongside guest speakers.

### **Advocacy Presence in Student Leadership**

This past year the Advocacy Centre participated in Concordia Senate and the Task Force on Sexual Violence and Sexual Misconduct. Both experiences allowed us to utilize our knowledge in working through Concordia administration to assist in initiatives that support student rights. One Advocate attended weekly meeting for about 3 months, assisting in the development of a report of recommendations to amend procedures and regulations regarding Concordia's procedural handling of sexual misconduct/violence complaints.

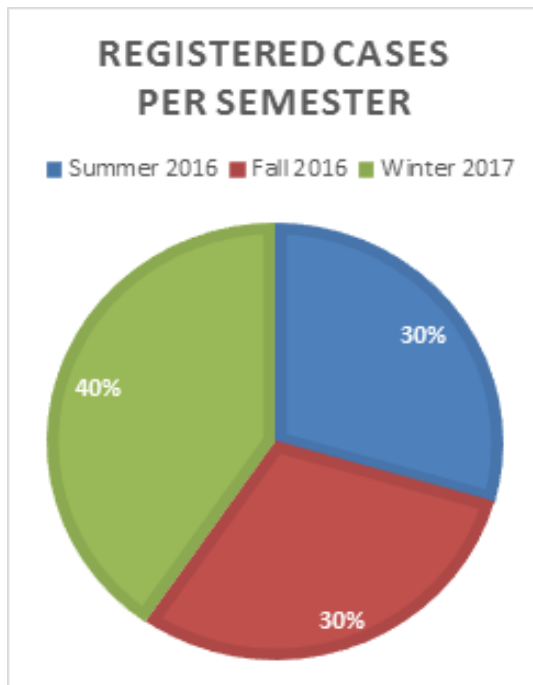
# Stats and Reflection

The Advocacy Center collects a variety of data points from the official intake form and workflow form on the services it provides. When an Advocate determines that a particular case may require multiple meetings or additional follow up after the first encounter, the student will be taken on as a client and asked to sign an intake form. Those cases then become registered cases and are tracked. We estimate that 50% to 60% of students that come to the Center will be registered as clients.

A registered case will be slotted into one of six service categories and processed according to priority. The time and resources required to resolve any particular file varies widely, from cases requiring a few hours of work with limited follow up, to cases requiring dozens of meetings and hundreds of personnel hours.

The following is a statistical breakdown of the registered cases from the last annual academic year, contrasted with the 2016-2017 academic year.

## 2016-2017



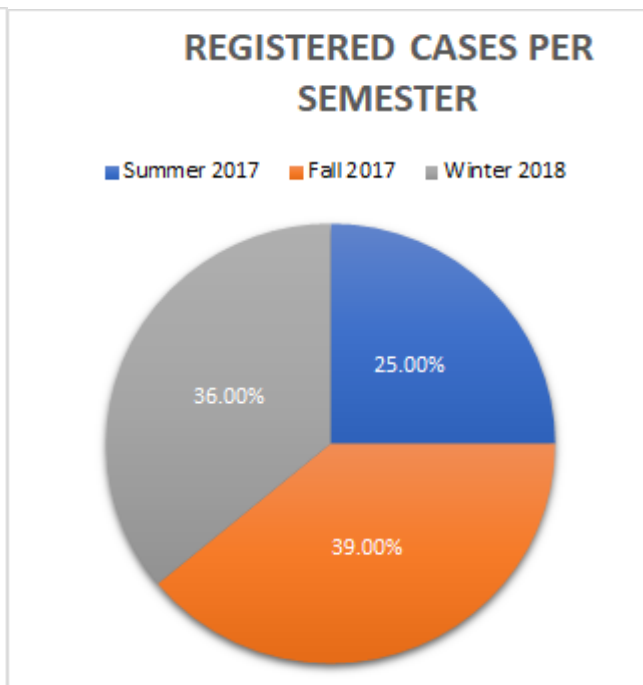
**Total cases: 275**

**Summer: 81**

**Fall: 83**

**Winter: 111**

## 2017-2018



**Total cases: 336**

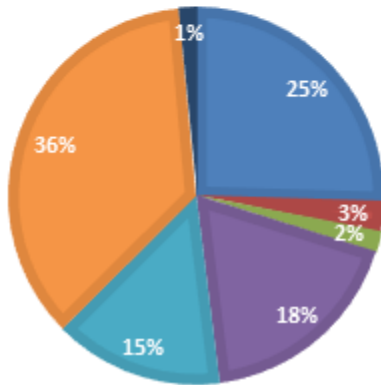
**Summer: 85**

**Fall: 130**

**Winter: 121**

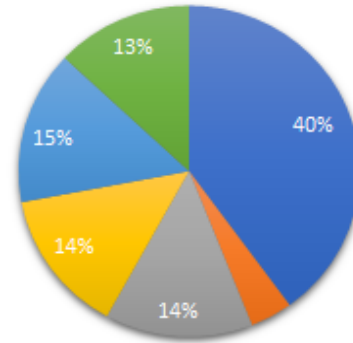
### SERVICES DELIVERED 2016-2017

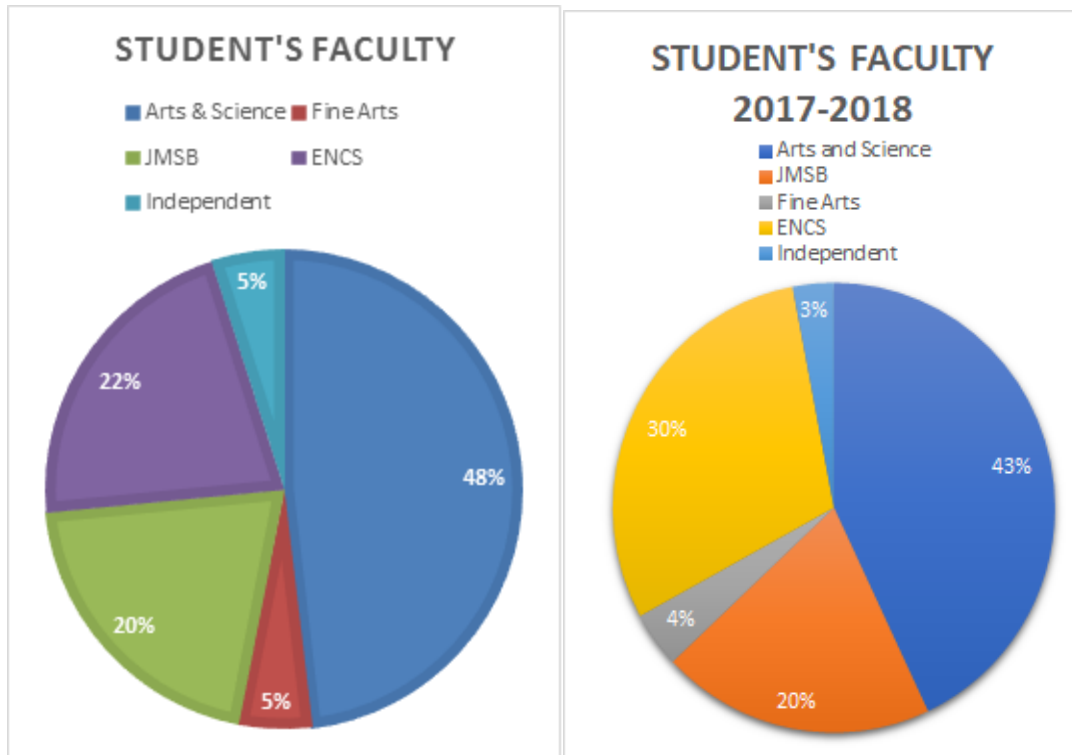
- Field 1: Academic Misconduct
- Field 2: Code of Rights and Responsibilities
- Field 3: Hearing
- Field 4: Student Request
- Field 5: Re-admission
- Field 6: Complaint or General Consultation
- Field 7: Miscellaneous



### SERVICES DELIVERED 2017- 2018

- Field 1: Academic Misconduct
- Field 2: Code of Rights and Responsibilities
- Field 3: Student Request
- Field 4: Readmission
- Field 5: Complaint or General Consultation
- Field 6: Miscellaneous





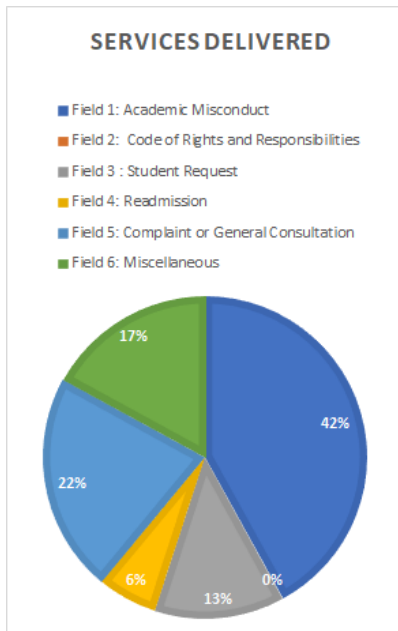
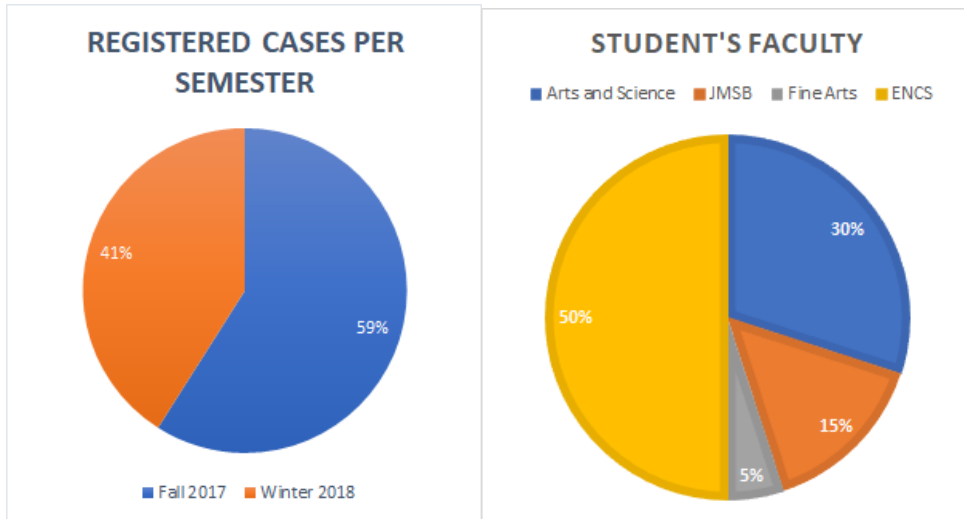
### Reflections

- About a 22% annual increase from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018 in Registered Cases. This is a total 34% increase in the number of registered cases from the 2015-2016 academic year.
- 36% Increase in ENCS academic cases
- Influx of Fall cases this year due to increased number of academic cases. Enrollment has increased at Concordia University and the higher number of students has contributed to the higher number of cases.
- Graduate students' cases are more complex and require a significant amount of time. The high majority of cases are academically related and only about 50% of students who visit the Centre open a registered case. The following are stats related to Graduate student cases from Fall 2017 to Winter 2018 (Summer 2017 Graduate cases have been filed with the undergraduate cases as they were handled primarily by the CSU Advocacy Manager):

### Graduate Cases 2017-2018

**Total Fall 2017 = 32**

**Total Winter 2018 = 22**



- Most registered cases are related to the ENCS department
- High majority of registered cases are academically related with 42% of cases related to academic misconduct

## Current and New Initiatives

### Events/ Workshops

In the centre's effort to promote students' rights and interest, we are hosting a series of workshops on strategic career planning. This has been and continues to be a long-term

initiative aimed at empowering students to correctly market their working skills and build strategic professional relationships beginning in university. Employee Maria Stawnichy is front-lining the project and has worked diligently in planning this event, which should take place in the Fall semester and more in later semesters.

## **GSA Advocacy Office**

The GSA office on Mackay street will continue handling student traffic this academic year seeing as our contract with the GSA has been extended for another 2 years. Therefore, we will continue pursuing a more central approach to graduate student cases and continue to pursue projects and initiatives related to graduate student rights and interests.

## **Social Media**

This year we intend to revisit our social media campaign and standardize our methods for advertising our office on social media. With the assistance of the new Communications Coordinator, we hope to revamp our social media presence and insure a more sustainable online marketing plan.

## **Conclusion**

Empowering students and supporting their academic pursuits is more than a motto. It is the prime directive for all staff, projects, services, policies, and procedures within the Advocacy Centre. We will continue to assess how well we meet that motto, fulfill our mission, and move toward seeing our vision become a consistent reality.

This past year the Advocacy Centre has gone through many changes with its staffing. There was significant turnover this year in hiring new employees to fill student advocate, graduate advocate and admin assistant positions. The training of new advocates however was facilitated by the new training program. This includes using mock scenarios, in depth training on student requests, new guides and resources for Advocates as well as a new mentorship program reduced the time Advocates need to become independent by over 30%.

We have also seen an increase of clients at the Centre as the Concordia Student Advocacy Office has reduced its personnel, therefore sending a lot of clients to our office. At this point they only have one advocate handling cases, meaning that our office has taken on their usual workload. This year, we hope to explore new possibilities in handling our increasing



workload. Our clientele has significantly increased in number and has added a great deal of new cases to our advocates' workloads.

Another significant undertaking was the large addition of graduate students as clients of the GSA Advocacy Centre, with one staff member exclusively handling graduate cases. The focus of the coordinator has been in maintaining essential services, ensuring continued support to the employees and assisting on cases.

While most of the energy of the Advocacy Centre was focused on maintaining essential services, we have also been able to initiate several new programs on a pilot project basis. The implementation of the workshop project will be an essential part of our mission to explore student interests. It is our hope that these kinds of initiatives can lead to new models of student led educational initiatives on campus that directly impact key areas of student interests namely innovation, networking, acquiring work experience, social activism and employment.