

Karen McBride  
President & CEO  
Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE)

Dear Ms. McBride,

We are writing to you to express serious concerns about Concordia University's *Concordia China Student Recruitment Partner Program (CCSRPP)*.

Earlier this year, facts came to light regarding the treatment of students recruited in China on behalf of the CCSRPP that have shocked the Concordia community. It leads us to conclude that students are being recruited on false pretenses and are mistreated both financially and physically after arriving in Canada.

Concordia's student newspaper, *The Link*, published an investigative article (attached) about the CCSRPP in its issue of 25 September 2012. What was revealed in that article was scandalous, yet after talking to more of the students recruited we have come to discover even more upsetting information.

The CCSRPP is run by Peter Low, a consultant with Orchard Consulting, a company operating out of Vancouver, BC. Prospective students apply to Concordia via Mr. Low, who charges a fee of over \$2,000, and guarantees acceptance to Concordia. Normally, students accepted have little or no proficiency in English at all, and are expected to take non-credit language courses at Concordia costing up to \$30,000. Mr. Low either implies, or directly states, that they must reside at a homestay at a cost of \$900 per month. The conditions in the homestays are grossly misrepresented. Students have been provided inadequate food, in quality and amount, are crowded, must do excessive chores and report that they have been threatened when trying to seek other accommodations. Since the story broke in *The Link*, an alarming number of international students have come forward with similar stories: being shaken down for money, being accused of theft, and being provided little in return for the thousands of dollars they pay for consultants and homestays.

Concordia University has sought to absolve itself of any responsibility for its collusion with Orchard Consulting and Peter Low by claiming that the latter operate at arm's length. Yet Concordia benefits financially from this program, both in terms of the money paid for language courses, as well as eventual tuition. It seems that some people in Concordia's administration have been willing to look the other way in order to exploit international students directly, or profit from their exploitation by others.

Presenting potential international students with false expectations is not unique to this case. In 2009 Concordia raised tuition by up to 50% - without warning - for students who had already enrolled and come to Canada, creating serious financial difficulties for hundreds of students who had budgeted for a stable tuition. Such yearly increases of up to \$6,000 led to drop-outs or prolonged enrolment for students, serious stress, physical and mental health issues, decreased quality of life and poor academic performance. We

suspect that Concordia, along with many other universities, has been treating international students as financial resources; competition for international students has led to ethical negligence toward the people being recruited.

It is clear to us that Concordia University has not respected the principles behind the CBIE's Code of Ethical Practice in general, and specifically the provisions section concerning Admissions and Recruitment. Students have been misinformed and misled, and in its responses (attached) Concordia's administration has merely sought to evade responsibility rather than explain the how this situation came to be.

We are proud to be able to host international students, and we are grateful for the opportunity for international exchange that the ever-increasing possibility of travel and study has provided, especially over the last decade. Yet we are also increasingly aware that as this exchange becomes easier, abusers lurk, waiting to exploit the educational aspirations of students abroad and the financial needs of post-secondary institutions at home.

We would ask the CBIE to investigate Concordia University's recruitment of international students, and the use by Concordia and by universities and colleges generally of third party recruiters and service providers like Mr. Low's Orchard Consulting and the homestay companies he deals with. We ask this in a spirit in keeping with the CBIE's Code of Ethics, and in recognition of Concordia's and Canada's commitment to welcoming students from around the world - a commitment we share, and do not wish to see stained by the kinds of practices that have come to light.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A group of concerned students at Concordia University