

FASA PROPOSAL



L'ASSOCIATION POUR UNE
SOLIDARITÉ SYNDICALE ÉTUDIANTE

And the Fine Art Student Alliance

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1. What is the purpose of this proposal?

THE PROPOSAL

The Goal of this proposal is to help Regular Members of FASA which shall include all undergraduate students currently registered in a specialization, major, or minor within a program of study in the Fine Arts Faculty at Concordia University make an informed decision in regards to FASA's membership with ASSÉ.

The Proposal was developed to inform students about ASSÉ and FASA and to guide them in order for them to vote on the future outcome in regards to FASA's involvement in ASSÉ when elections come. All Regular Members have the right to vote in all FASA elections, recalls and by-elections, and on all issues to which they are entitled as per the Bylaws.¹

So, you might wonder who put this proposal together? The team for 2018 – 2019 of ASSÉ delegates from the Faculty of Fine Arts that attended one or more congresses. These delegates have worked together since 2018 to bring a clear and condense proposal and to highlight aspects of the history that surrounds student syndicalist groups in this case the history of ASSÉ and the role of FASA within it.

The proposal has been divided in 7 main categories and it has been organized in way that will hopefully help students understand the context of the situations and the needs of FASA in order to make a clear decision regarding the future of Student involvement in ASSÉ.

¹ **SCOPE:** Direct Democracy refers to a non-hierarchical decision making process, a commitment to the principle of self-management (autogestion), and a horizontal distribution of power. In the context of FASA, direct democracy means that power resides in the hands of the Membership and that the General Meeting (including Special and Annual General Meetings) is the highest decision making body. Wherever possible, decisions should be taken collectively through meetings of the Members. All other internal bodies, including the FASA Board of Directors and the Coordinator Committee, are accountable to the Members and are bound by mandates decided upon by the Members during General Meetings.

2. What is FASA?

The Fine Arts Student Alliance (FASA) is an accredited student association, funded by students in Fine Arts through a fee levy. All students enrolled in a Major, Minor or Specialization in Fine Arts are FASA members.

The Alliance is run by five elected Coordinators and one hired Office Coordinator, who takes care of the day-to-day operations, alongside the Fine Arts Board of Directors, which is made up of student representatives from the various Fine Arts departments, as well as delegates from the fine arts clubs and student groups.

The five elected coordinators are the General Coordinator, Clubs and Services Coordinator, Outreach Coordinator, Student Life Coordinator and Finance Coordinator. Together, the six Coordinators work to oversee day-to-day operations, program a wide range of diverse events and activities on campus as well as in the Montreal community, administer Special Project Grants, support Fine Arts clubs, and seek out various ways to represent and recognize Concordia's creative community.

FASA is committed to being an open, inclusive organization that recognizes diversity, and promotes access and inclusion to communities traditionally marginalized based on gender, sexual orientation, race, economic status, language ability, religion preference, age, ability, and other intersecting forms of oppression. FASA further recognizes that issues of power and privilege and underlying, often unspoken, ideologies of domination and subordination, often reinforce and maintain our organizational hierarchies. Therefore, FASA chooses to operate within a framework of anti-oppression.

ONE OF THE PURPOSES STATED ON BYLAWS² IS:

To encourage and facilitate academic, political and social communication between all undergraduate Fine Arts students, the CSU and the University administration;

² Refer to FASA's bylaws: <http://fasaconcordia.com/resources/>

3. What is ASSÉ?

ASSÉ stands for Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (ASSÉ). It is a Canadian student union founded in February 2001 in Sherbrooke, Quebec, which contains CEGEP and university-level students in 25 member student unions throughout Quebec.

By its values and positions, the ASSÉ positions itself differently from the other province-wide student unions, the Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (FEUQ), and the Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec (FECQ).

The ASSÉ is a way to connect student associations throughout Québec to fight for students' rights. To sum up, it is a collaboration of student associations in which each participant group funds the ASSÉ to create mobilization campaigns amongst other events.

ASSÉ'S SIX CORE PRINCIPLES³:

1. For a public, free, secular, quality, accessible and non-discriminatory education system;
2. For financial aid system whose goal is to eliminate student debt and to meet the fundamental needs of students;
3. For an education system free from any kind of interference from the private sector, including subcontracting;
4. For the democratization of educational institutions with the aim of self-management;
5. For solidarity with every progressive international struggle aiming for the improvement of society;
6. Against all forms of globalization which prioritize profit over the interests of the people of the world.

³ <http://www.ASSÉ-solidarite.qc.ca/ASSÉ/presentation/>

4. How is FASA related to ASSÉ?

SHORT HISTORY

FASA became a member of ASSÉ in March 2014. It was voted on by Fine Arts students through a referendum question in the FASA elections. From 2014 to 2019, FASA has been presenting political positions and mandates to take a stance on or to adopt to students through AGMs and GMs. The FASA Positions Book is the regrouping of all of those decisions. It is used in ASSÉ Congresses by the FASA delegates to represent, propose and vote in accordance with Fine Arts students beliefs. FASA is notably known for pushing ASSÉ for inclusivity towards queer gender identities and English-speaking individuals.

In the 2015 winter semester, student associations throughout Québec organized strikes against the government austerity measures. The Fine Arts students went on strike on March 28th and April 2nd. In the midst of the strike movement, ASSÉ executives called its associations to operate a « strategic withdrawal » in order to come back stronger in fall 2015. This calling was met with protest by ASSÉ associations who felt the executives were by-passing their members' mandate regarding strikes. The controversy eventually led ASSÉ to motion (vote in favor of) the impeachment of its executive team.

The strike movement of winter 2015 died down and in the years following it ASSÉ became less active. This can be observed from their online presence and the number of events organized. ASSÉ also started facing problems of relevance and accountability relating to their political landscape and finances. As a result, associations started disaffiliating (repeal of membership and financial participation) from ASSÉ. In winter 2017, ASSÉ faced a hard blow when two active and large associations disaffiliated – namely *Le Syndicat étudiant du Cégep Marie-Victorin* & *L'Association étudiante du Cégep de Saint-Laurent*. Following those events - and since the situation wasn't getting better - associations started neglecting their social participation as well as blocking their financial contribution to ASSÉ. This led ASSÉ members to bring those issues in Congresses.

However, the difficulty to find sustainable and respectful solutions brought an association to submit the dissolution of ASSÉ as a notice of motion in fall 2018. This means that ASSÉ could be dissolved if enough associations vote for it in the Congresses to come.

FINANCE: How does FASA's budget work?

FASA and its initiatives are supported by three different student fee levy funds. All Regular Members contribute to the general operations and services of FASA through the three fees. Each fee is allocated to a specific budget.

The three fees are:

- Operational: \$2.60 per credit. The Operational budget funds the general running of the organization and its clubs.
- Special Project Grants (SPG): \$0.80 per credit. The Special Project Grants budget is entirely redistributed to undergraduate students through project funding.
- **Mobilization (ASSÉ): \$1.50 per semester (only fall and winter). The Mobilization budget is used for the remuneration of FASA's membership to ASSÉ. This budget is entirely forwarded to ASSÉ and funds the general running of ASSÉ.**

FASA membership to ASSÉ, which encompasses the student fee levy, was established by a referendum question in the elections of March 2014.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY ASSÉ

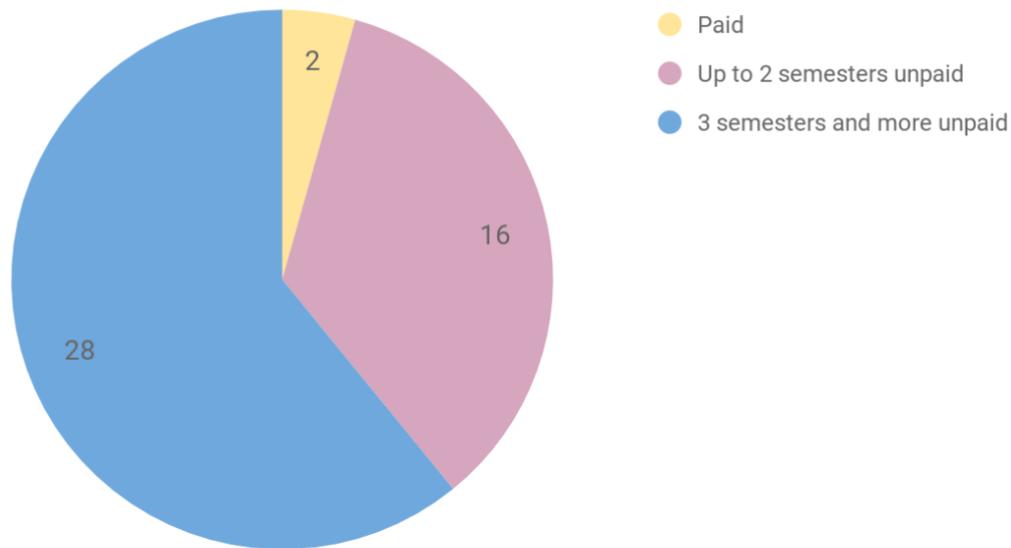
The general running of ASSÉ is funded by fees from students within their member unions. This means that each association that is a member contributes \$3 to ASSÉ per student they represent per year. FASA yearly membership fee is approximately \$10,300.

This collaborative structure allows ASSÉ to have a budget that funds mobilization efforts, research, publications, workshops and congresses amongst other things.

In the last years, a significant amount of ASSÉ associations have stopped contributing. The reason for this varies from active protest of ASSÉ leadership, inability to pay, passive way to cut ties with ASSÉ, loss of interest in ASSÉ, lack of communication within an association and else.

As of March 2018, out of 46 associations part of ASSÉ, only 2 were up to date with their membership fees (FASA and AESCF). 16 associations had never sent 1 to 2 semesters worth of membership fee while others had been blocking the money of 3 semesters and more. Some are in debt up to \$30,000.⁴

State of Membership Fee (March 2018)



⁴ Procès-verbal du congrès des 24 et 25 février 2018 de l'ASSÉ.

The lack of regular funding has led ASSÉ to make drastic cuts in their mobilization efforts. For example, the strike budget doesn't have any projected expenses. In the Congress on October 27th-28th, the financial issues and accumulated debts were discussed.

These were the answers proposed by different associations:

- Debt cancellation
- Financial solidarity (Large associations pay while smaller ones are exempted)

These were the answers proposed by ASSÉ executive team:

- Get new associations to affiliate (become a member)
- Donations from large and well-off associations
- Increase of membership fee from \$3 to \$4,50 per student per year (currently a deposed motion to take position on)

ASSÉ is a student union that claims to be founded on a structure based on democracy and solidarity. The financial difficulties encountered in the past years highlight the gradual loss of respect and collaboration in between members of ASSÉ towards a shared goal. When an association blocks their funding without their student body voting for disaffiliation, it demonstrates a complete rejection of a democratic process. It also puts stress on the structure of ASSÉ and members who still want to lead a constructive discussion on the Quebec social landscape. Moreover, the situation has forced Congresses to mainly revolve around financial participation instead of constructive solutions such as reorganization of its structure or constructive dissolution (dissolve to start anew).

5. Socio-political context.

To make an enlightened decision on this current issue, it is important to understand our current political situation and the pros and cons of being part of a student union. Regardless of the event of a dissolution or disaffiliation with our current syndicate ASSÉ, FASA and the art community of Concordia ought to remain politically active.

ASSÉ provides a network with cégeps⁵ and other universities throughout Québec, thus granting a capacity to mobilize on various issues in solidarity with other faculties outside Concordia. A dissolution would provoke a loss in our political weight since we would rely more on our independent community. That said, it is important to note that we would remain covered under CSU's syndicate (FEUQ).⁶

⁵ Collège d'Enseignement Général et Professionnel (CEGEP) (a Québec-specific academic establishment that replaces the last year of high-school and the first year of university for every Québec resident).

⁶ Fédération Étudiante Universitaire du Québec.

While Fine Arts students do have much to gain from leaving ASSÉ, a dissolution would not be without consequences. ASSÉ is in a dire financial situation and survives mostly from FASA and 3 other big student union's contributions (AGEECLG, SOGEECOM and AFESH). Considering that Sherbrooke is most likely about to disaffiliate, ASSÉ will not survive in the event of our disaffiliation. Therefore, our decision is conclusive of ASSÉ's future.

Let it be noted that those who will suffer the most from ASSÉ's collapse are mostly cégeps and especially those in regions. ASSÉ have been greatly influential in educating various cégeps on political activism, militant actions, or simply in offering guidance in their process towards creating and managing a functional student association. cégep's delegates have been vocal about their fear and anxiety of losing this network. Concordia has the luxury of being in a cosmopolitan city where our voice can easily be heard, which is not the case in rural areas. ASSÉ was creating a bridge for these communities by offering them a platform to speak to other student unions.

In Quebec's current context, an active network will become increasingly important. First, the CAQ⁷ has won a majority during the last provincial election from the regional votes, as it has only one seat on the Island of Montreal. There is an active cultural and political tension between Montreal and the rest of Quebec. A cosmopolitan city means a higher tolerance for bilingualism and a more diverse religious and ethnic population, which are both far from being reflective of Quebec's panorama. As an English university, rich with international students, keeping an active relationship with these academic communities helps to dismantle the increasingly popular nationalistic discourse that antagonizes marginalized communities and anglophones in other communities. To mention a few things, the CAQ's leader Francois Legault is having a recurrent anti-immigration sentiment and has been notorious for proposing a wall on our southern border. He also pronounces that there's no such thing as Islamophobia in Quebec as a response to the proposed national holiday against Islamophobia. Quebec's regions are the battleground against right-wing nationalistic, xenophobic, transphobic, and patriarchal policies. It is a recurring world-wide trend that right-wing parties come to power through non-cosmopolitan areas, since the left and center-left have lost touch with these communities. The delegates that spoke at the last ASSÉ meeting shared their anguish over losing this network, and it ought to be greatly considered.

In that political reality, it is in our advantage to have political weight, and the left-wing community will need to stay organized and informed. The dismantlement of ASSÉ would create a hole which will take a few years to fill, and it is an inconvenient political period for our community to have an unstable ground.

That said, ASSÉ's inactivity cannot be overlooked. Their website alone presents a single activity since 2017, and on Facebook a small number of events have been announced for the 2018-2019 year, while the Fine Arts students will have contributed \$10,300 to ASSÉ. And while a

⁷ Coalition Avenir Quebec, our current provincial political party, situating itself in the center-right axis.

movement is rising *against unpaid internship*, so far ASSÉ have done little to join other associations. ASSÉ didn't try to coordinate itself to join the movement nor was it motioned to put out at least a "support statement". Moreover, the official campaign of ASSÉ this year is on *the commercialization and privatization of education*. This shows how much ASSÉ is overall disconnected from the Québec student's reality of the moment. Therefore, it is important to note that for the last few years, and in the present moment, ASSÉ is stagnant and any change is speculative.

This text does not aim at encouraging students to stay or to leave ASSÉ but to assert our current political situation. Staying in ASSÉ is in no way ensuring functional and proactive political action, as the last few years of inaction from them have shown. However, we must ensure that Concordia will remain socially and politically active, and hopefully find ways to connect with groups and associations inside and outside of Montreal to compensate the loss that will be caused by ASSÉ's collapse.

6. What is the process and the options?

OPTIONS:

After being informed about FASA's situation with ASSÉ I would like FASA to:

(1) DISAFFILIATE FROM ASSÉ

FASA will cease being active within ASSÉ and cease charging students the ASSÉ fee-levy \$1.50 per fall and winter semesters. *

(2) VOTE FOR DISSOLUTION IN THE NEXT ASSÉ CONGRESS

FASA will vote for the Dissolution of ASSÉ in the next Congress. If the Dissolution does not pass FASA will remain as an active member of ASSÉ and will continue charging students the ASSÉ fee-levy of \$1.50 per fall and winter semesters. *

(3) REMAIN AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF ASSÉ

FASA will remain an active member of ASSÉ and will continue charging students the ASSÉ fee-levy of \$1.50 per fall and winter semesters. *

** The wording of the descriptions is subject to slight changes. This is because a Concordia staff is revising them.*

HOW TO VOTE?

Students are encouraged to vote at the poll tables:

Tuesday, March 26th
VA: LOBBY
EV: JUNCTION (outside Fine Arts Reading Room)

Wednesday, March 27th
VA: LOBBY
EV: BASEMENT (next to Le Gym)

7. General mobilization within FASA.

FASA is always open to student initiatives and to suggestions of mobilization projects. FASA believes mobilization can take different forms such as inclusive practices and socially engaged activities amongst others.

Finally, FASA has an inclusivity policy and will not tolerate violence in any of its forms.