



CONFUSION AND FRUSTRATION OVER GLOBAL LEARNING EMAIL

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Tensions are rising, it seems, between a group of international students and the Global Learning Office.

On the afternoon of February 4, an email was sent out to international students detailing the regulations of their student visa. The subject was this: the time spent at a stipend position is included in the 20-hour-a-week-limit for international students.

There is contention between some international students and the Global Learning Office over whether this was either a notification of, or a change in, Concordia's interpretation of the federal law regarding the 20-hour work limit for students on an F-1 student visa.

Matt Beatty, Director of Global Learning, said this policy was not a change at all, but instead a routine reminder "to help advise and follow the F-1 visa regulations."

Numerous international students said this policy was either not correctly communicated to them or a sudden switch in policy. Many students that work both an hourly job and a stipend position say they have been stuck between giving up hours at campus pay, or resigning from their stipend position which plays significantly less at an hourly rate.

The terms of a student visa mean international students can work either on campus or at an off-campus job directly related to their area of study.

International students on campus make up a large portion of the student workforce. They are in virtually every building working both service jobs and fulfilling leadership or mentorship roles. Concordia's Student Government Association's executive team of is only made up of international students.

"(Campus) would collapse without international students," said Eunice Kayitare, Vice President of SGA. "Already we can see in The Maize being sometimes closed because they don't have workers and the only workers that go there are international students."

She and other members of the governing body set up a Change.org petition, which included a Google Docs link containing the words of the email, about a week after receiving the message.

"The petition was actually for us to see how many international students are aware of the situation, and who sees it as discriminatory action," said Amina Fatkhulloeva, President of SGA. So far, the petition has 327 virtual "signatures."

Fatkhulloeva said the international students are giving the Office enough time to explain the confusion, but have been neither timely nor clear in their communication.

A second email was sent apologizing for the confusion, and once again notifying that "the rules from the Department of Labor and Homeland Security have not changed."

Both Kayitare and Fatkhulloeva claim to have kept multiple emails that show the Global Learning Office accepted stipend-paid position hours and hourly-paid hours as one and the same.

Hannah Gilsdorf, an international community intern, said the lack of clarity is "infuriating," and that a lot of her friends' lives have been disrupted by this notice.

"(The email) was sent out on a Friday afternoon in the middle of the semester. Staff leaves an hour and a half later, leaving the students with nothing," said Gilsdorf, citing the timing of the email to be one of the things that frustrated her the most.

Fatkhulloeva said she immediately had to find other workers to take her shifts at the

information desk, as her being president of SGA already takes about 10-20 hours a week.

Rabiah Guira, an international student who works in the Korn Krib, said she had planned on applying to be an RA, but reading this email stopped her.

There is a lot of gray area, said Fatkhulloeva, between ICE, the Department of Labor and how Concordia interprets it.

She posted about this scenario in her United World Colleges Alumni Facebook group, where a bunch of respondents told her that their schools' policies were not like Concordia's interpretation.

Gilsdorf, curious about surrounding schools' rules, said she reached out to St. Olaf College, where she believes stipend hours do not count as work hours. She continued that she has heard other international



Eunice Kayitare, Avash Shrestha, Amina Fatkhulloeva, Yuden Dorji and Susham Bhujel, SGA.

CONCO PRESIDENT SELECTION TO BE CONFIDENTIAL

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In 2011, Concordia hired its 11th president: President William J. Craft. Now, 11 years later, Craft announced his upcoming retirement effective on July 1, 2023.

Concordia's Board of Regents is starting the process to search for a new president, according to an email sent to campus on Feb. 8, 2022.

Board of Regents chairperson Mary Ranum '78 said, "We as members of the board of regents know how important this decision is for the future of Concordia. We know that higher education as a whole faces challenges. We are absolutely committed to finding the best next possible leader who will be committed to Concordia, to its history, and tradition, and also to addressing its challenges to push Concordia forward."

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The search committee will meet Feb. 17 to discuss the schedule of the search. Presidential Search Committee chairperson Rev. Gary Henderson '79 estimates the team will consult with students in open discussions held in April to create a presidential profile that will be released in May.

"It's important that we don't just listen to our own voices because there are a lot of interested parties and stakeholders in this process. Going forward, there will be lots of opportunities to listen and to learn so that as we create the profile of the next president, it is really reflective of our community and what vision we have for the future," Henderson said

The Board of Regents also announced the search will be a closed process with public discussions of candidates in early April. According to the email, Concordia is consulting with the Academic Search firm and both parties agreed a closed search will allow for candidates to pursue Concordia's presidency without risking current positions of employment.

"Individuals who currently have senior positions at other colleges would not be willing to put their name into our pool for this position if this was public. It was the judgment of the board of regents and the agreement of our search consultants that we made this a closed process," Ranum said.

According to Higher Ed Dive, search firms are becoming more widely used by colleges and universities. Judith Wilde and James Finkelstein tracked the number of presidential ads and mentions of search firms in The Chronicle of Higher Education for 50 years. In 1995, only 28% of ads named a search firm. Twenty years later, 92% of the advertised presidential searches included the name of an executive search firm or consultant.

Concordia chose to partner with Academic Search after considering four agen-

cies that were recommended by previous presidents.

"We wanted folks who not only knew what they were doing, but were also sensitive to the challenges and needs of Lutheran higher education," Ranum said.

Wilde also found in her research that colleges and universities which partner with search firms are more likely to conduct closed searches based on the speculation that confidentiality is necessary to attract the best candidates, per her article in Inside Higher Ed.

The last public search at Concordia was held in 1999, which led to Thomas Thomsen being elected as Concordia's ninth president. The campus was involved in making the presidential profile and frequently updated; after the committee searched and narrowed down candidates, students were able to publicly meet and speak with the three finalists.

This is Concordia's third time conducting a closed search process since the first held in 2003. During closed processes, as with Jolicoeur and Craft, students help make the profile and then can attend open meetings with the sole finalist near the end of the process.

The fear of public processes is that publicizing the names of candidates can jeopardize gifts to the college and can also lead to a more difficult to obtain state funding for public schools, said Jan Greenwood for Inside Higher Ed.

Wilde said candidates face three possibilities if they do not get hired: stay with the employer, stay if the employer incentivizes the position, or the university terminates the candidate's position.

Oftentimes when a college or university incentivizes the position or buys out a president's contract, the president receives a hefty compensation and it costs the college a large amount of money.

"In the end, the only ones to pay the price for secrecy are the colleges and universities of the sitting president. The candidates themselves have nothing to lose and quite possibly a great deal to gain," Wilde wrote for Higher Ed Dive.

Of the 13 colleges in MIAC, eight colleges have conducted presidential searches within the past two years, Concordia being one. While nearly split between public and closed searches, a majority have used search firms to aid in the process.

al students say other institutions interpret the law differently than Concordia is.

"This message really was intended with the best of spirit to help support and advise students, and I apologize for the confusion it has caused and panic it has perhaps created for both students and supervisors," said Beatty. "I think part of it is the understanding that we have students in lots of different positions, some that are being in full compliance already and others that may not be."

Kayitare is worried because she knows that the 20-hour limit rule, with these restrictions described in the email, has been violated frequently on campus by "plenty" of international students.

"We're being limited by our involvement of campus," said Kayitare. "I don't want to have to choose between making money and actually building a resume."

"You put a lot of trust into coming to a whole new country, a whole different school, and they made us believe that 'we have infrastructure to make sure every problem you might have, we're gonna help you,'" continued Kayitare. "But I don't see that."

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