



U N I V E R S I T É

**Concordia**

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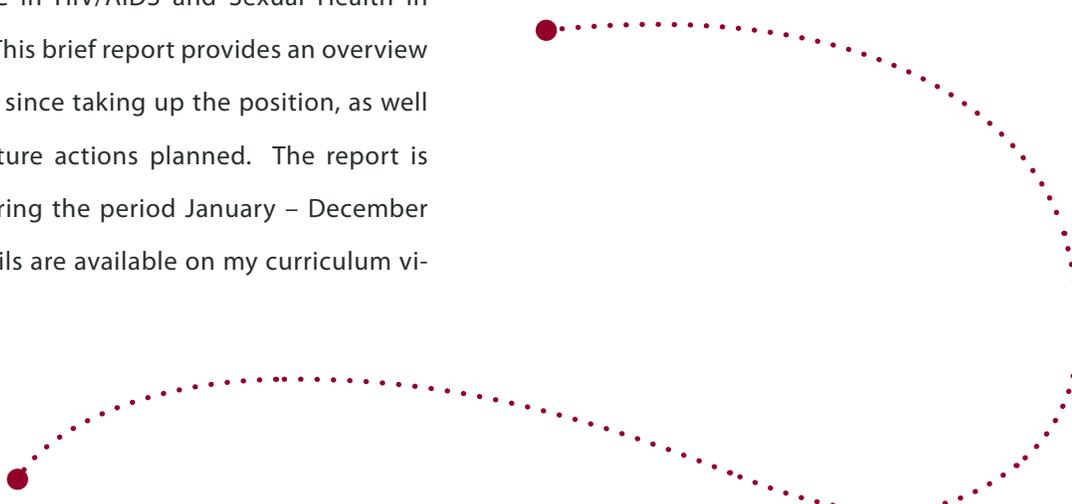
**Concordia University  
Research Chair**

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**HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health (Tier 2)**

**Annual Report 2009 | Dr. Viviane Namaste**

**W**ith great enthusiasm, I accepted the position of CURC in HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health in January 2009. This brief report provides an overview of my activities since taking up the position, as well as outlining future actions planned. The report is summary, covering the period January – December 2009. Full details are available on my curriculum vitae (attached).



## Highlights

- **2 distinguished lectures**
- **9 presentations and invited lectures in local and international contexts**
- **Recipient of a major human rights award in the field, the 2009 Award for Action in HIV/AIDS, bestowed upon me by the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and Human Rights Watch**
- **Named one of 7 “Hot Shot” Montréalers by the alternative weekly newspaper *Hour Magazine*, for my research and activist contributions to city life**
- **25 different media articles and representations during 2009**
- **Ongoing promotion and recruitment of 10 potential graduate students and 7 postdoctoral scholars working in HIV/AIDS**

# Recruitment

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The action plan submitted as part of this CURC outlined an intent to promote Concordia University as an engaging place to study HIV/AIDS, in conjunction with the university's broader strategic planning. As part of this work, I drafted and finalized a recruitment pamphlet which promotes Concordia as an innovative institutional site to study HIV/AIDS. The pamphlet was distributed in relevant networks of scholars working in the field, as well as at pertinent conferences and professional association meetings.

**10** potential graduate students

**7** different postdoctoral scholars

Response has been extremely positive to this recruitment tool. I have had in-depth discussions with 10 potential graduate students (doctoral level), three of whom are preparing applications for admission (2 PhD in Humanities; 1 SIP). This work has also involved assisting students in preparing applications for grants and financial support. In addition, I have been in contact with 7 different postdoctoral scholars about the possibility of continuing their research here at Concordia. Of these, one person plans to come to Concordia later in 2010, and an additional individual is preparing a funding application in this regard.

## supervision & committee work for **9** graduate students

I currently supervise 6 graduate students, and am on the committees of an additional 3 students. In the fall of 2009, I also co-taught a course on Community-Based Research, in collaboration with the Coalition des organismes communautaires dans la lutte contre le sida (COCQ-Sida). Finally, I acted as External Examiner for a PhD dissertation on lipodystrophy and HIV/AIDS at the University of Ottawa (December 2009).

course taught on  
community-based  
**research**

I have been actively promoting the CURC, and Concordia more broadly, within the past year. Specifically with regards to HIV/AIDS, I organized one community event (Axel Léotard, French author and activist, October 8 2009), and supported a local community film festival on HIV/AIDS (vihsion, November 2009).

The course on Community-Based Research, offered in collaboration with the COCQ-Sida, also served as an outreach and promotion strategy with community-based HIV/AIDS agencies in Montréal.

featured in  
Concordia's  
marketing  
strategy

25  
media  
articles  
& representations

In addition, my research and CURC activities have yielded 25 different media articles and representations in 2009. I was a featured researcher of Concordia's media relations in June 2009. My research accomplishments have also been featured in Concordia's larger marketing strategy, notably its "Big Thinking for a Small Planet" advertisements.

I have been actively conducting research in the field, as well as preparing grant applications for future research projects. In what is perhaps the most exciting news of this report, I was the recipient of the 2009 Award for Action in HIV/AIDS, bestowed upon me by the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and Human Rights Watch. This award recognizes my research accomplishments in the field, and has provided a great deal of visibility for my research programme, both locally and internationally.

Soon after taking up the CURC position, I learned that the national terrain of HIV/AIDS research had shifted somewhat dramatically since my original submission of a CURC application and workplan. Specifically, two national grants were funded, designed to facilitate collaboration and teaching on HIV/AIDS research. One grant seeks to bring together scholars working across disciplines in HIV/AIDS, to forge innovative research programmes (Reach grant, CIHR). The second grant is focussed on training the next generation of HIV/AIDS researchers, specifically graduate students and community-based scholars (STIHR grant, CIHR).

I was invited to join both of these initiatives, and accepted with great pleasure. This initiative, however, shifted the substance of some of the programme of research that I had originally proposed in

## Recipient of the 2009 Award for Action in HIV/AIDS



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Such a framework would highlight Concordia as a unique institution to study HIV/AIDS

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my CURC workplan. I outline two of the major conceptual shifts in this regard, and link them to strategic planning.

**W**ith regards to research, my evaluation of the national initiative is such that certain fields and disciplines are heavily represented – the case of public health, epidemiology and even social science. However, the humanities remain under-represented within the coordination currently underway at the national level.

With an eye on distinguishing Concordia as a truly innovative site to research and study HIV/AIDS, I prepared a SSHRC Research Development Initiative with a proposal aimed to develop the contribution of semiotics to empirical research in the field of HIV/AIDS (submitted fall 2009). Such a framework would distinguish my own trajectory from more traditional, and even critical social science research agenda currently present in the field. Moreover, it would highlight Concordia as a unique institution to study HIV/AIDS, and assist in the recruitment of outstanding graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. Results from this competition are pending.

**W**ith regards to training the next generation of HIV/AIDS researchers, I am involved in the pedagogy committee of the CIHR training grant in question. Being involved in this way allows me an

excellent opportunity to observe the kind of training available at different institutions, in order to think about how to demarcate the specificity of inquiry available at Concordia. Such reflection will also support graduate student and postdoctoral recruitment.

My involvement in these two large-scale, national grants has required a certain modification of the original workplan submitted.

More specifically, my energies are now concentrated on these two grants, particularly in the near future as they are both in their initial and formative stages. Given the important work of structuring both

research and training within HIV/AIDS at a national level, my involvement in these initiatives is important. While these grants currently occupy much of my time, I remain committed to realizing certain of the initiatives outlined in my initial workplan – specifically, a project on the history of HIV/AIDS with regards to transsexual communities in Paris (a CIHR grant was submitted fall 2009, and I have just received news that the application was successful), as well as knowledge transfer on a project devoted to bisexualities and HIV prevention (Projet polyvalence book manuscript, forthcoming from University of Toronto press). Moreover, in the medium term I remain committed to exploring the possibility of a team grant for Concordia researchers working in the field of HIV/AIDS, as outlined in my initial CURC workplan.

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**T**he substance of these research projects in some ways diverges from my original CURC workplan. However, such changes were discussed with Carole Brabant in the early fall 2009, and are designed to respond to the current environment for research and training of graduate students. These modifications reflect, in the best possible sense, the ways in which research is dynamic and changing, a process of discovery. The research projects proposed, as well as my involvement in two major national initiatives, seek to position Concordia as a particularly unique

# Research cont.

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and dynamic institution in which to research and study HIV/AIDS. Thus, while some of the elements of the original CURC workplan have been modified, my work remains committed to fulfilling the broad objectives of the CURC (to articulate the contribution of critical social science research to innovative HIV and STD prevention education; to increase collaboration among Concordia faculty working on HIV/AIDS and sexual health; to coordinate and reinforce training of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars at Concordia in the field of HIV/AIDS and sexual health; to increase the visibility of Concordia University's leadership in the field of HIV/AIDS and sexual health, through outreach activities and media representation).

These objectives are in turn linked to broader strategic goals of Concordia: academic work of the highest quality; outstanding student experience; community engagement and responsibility. Do feel free to contact me should you wish to provide feedback on the research component of this CURC given the information presented in this report.

## The budget & monies

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**T**he financial resources allocated to support the CURC activities have been used in the following ways: support of graduate students (research contracts; funding for international travel to support their field research); community outreach (Concordia HIV/AIDS lecture series; community event; vihsions

film festival); printing and mailout of recruitment pamphlet; recruitment (Conférence sur la recherche communautaire, Paris octobre 2009); books and relevant documentation.

# And the future?

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It has only been a year since accepting the CURC position, and a lot has been accomplished! I look forward to continuing this work. Specific activities planned and in the initial stages of development include:

- **Course on Community-Based Research, to be offered in Rimouski, Winter 2010, in collaboration with the COCQ-Sida**
- **Ongoing recruitment of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. As per the original CURC workplan, I will concentrate some of these recruitment efforts in francophone sites, notably at the 5th International Francophone AIDS Conference to be held later this year. Moreover, one postdoctoral scholar plans to come to study at Concordia in 2010**
- **Finalize book manuscript for Projet Polyvalence (advance contract with University of Toronto Press)**
- **Continued involvement in national HIV/AIDS research grant, as well as the national training grant**
- **Exploration of the possibility of a team grant for Concordia researchers working on HIV/AIDS**
- **Ongoing media representation**
- **Continued community outreach**

# Concluding comments

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**T**he year has been busy notably with getting many of the different components of the CURC up and running, particularly in terms of recruitment and community outreach. I look forward to continuing my work in this area, and to working to ensure that the CURC meets the broader strategic planning goals of Concordia University. If necessary, please feel free to contact me to discuss any matters raised within this report.

