

Students denounce Sydney College of the Arts merger

Our reporters
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Sydney College of the Arts students and staff are continuing their protests against the University of Sydney administration's attempts to transfer the highly-regarded fine arts institution onto another campus. Students spoke to WSWS reporters about the impact on their studies and their artistic work.

Cecilia, one of those occupying the SCA administration building, spoke with WSWS reporters last week. She is a sculptural ceramicist and studying for a masters' degree in fine arts.

"I'm supposed to finish in February this year and this has caused immense stress on myself and in my work," she said. "How can you be reading and writing your thesis paper with all of this going on? ... Am I going to have a studio to finish my work, to fire my vessels, my sculptures in the kilns? Am I going to have a supervisor, to supervise my research? What am I supposed to do?"

"We have about 160 post-graduate students—PhD and masters—who will be in a similar position. We were told on June 21 that they were going to shut us down and that was just when the holidays started for everyone. We're art students, how are we supposed to be thinking what's happening with my degree?"

"My work talks about poverty and indigenous issues. I want people to help us save our school, save ceramics, jewellery and glass. The glass studio is the only studio in Australia! Our ceramic studio is the only one in Australia where you can make sculptures in ceramics and do research as part of the work. There's nowhere else!"

A student who wanted to remain anonymous said: "I'm a research student doing a PhD in screen [moving image] arts. I'm not sure if my supervisor is going to be in place. He doesn't know either. Sixty percent of the staff are going to be cut. We don't know where we

are going to be on the main campus in two or three months' time.

"I use 16mm film and don't know if the equipment is going to be there [at the University of Sydney] or if there is going to be space for me to finish my research practice. I don't know and no-one can tell me. This is so disturbing and unnerving. None of us can do our work, none of us."

Alana is a former honours student from UNSW's art school. She decided to complete her course at SCA because "the conditions were very cramped" at the UNSW facility.

"We had very supportive teachers but increasingly they were changing the program. I think the idea was to get more students in, basically more money, and a lot more international students but sadly that made the structure worse. A lot of people were against the changes to the honours program and students ended up leaving. I had to share a desk even though my work is very large scale. The great thing at SCA is I get to have my own studio and have such big inspiring grounds to create my work in.

"I think it's a really sad for the arts in general and with all these changes happening to COFA [UNSW arts and design faculty], the SCA and the threat to close down the NAS. What's this going to do to the Sydney arts scene? People are going to go to Melbourne or to another country. Where are they going to study?"

"Young artists might leave and the drain is going to affect art culture quite badly, I guess it already is affecting the arts community. There's a strong sense of doom and gloom among students and I know a lot of people aren't even coming into the studio out of protest, especially in ceramics and glass-making because they're getting completely cut. It's about \$5,000 a year to study here so do you really don't want

to have to move to main campus because you may not be receiving the same services or teachers.”



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