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## Uni 'ripped heart out of VCA'

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CONCERN over the future of the former Victorian College of the Arts continues to grow after a graduating student was applauded at a presentation ceremony for criticising the college's takeover by Melbourne University.

Filmmaker Robbie McEwen accepted his degree last week before declaring in front of vice-chancellor Glyn Davis and other university officials at the Melbourne Recital Centre that "people could thank the University of Melbourne for ripping the heart out of the VCA".

College lecturers who were there say the applause from students and their families was long and sustained, while Professor Davis appeared stunned.

Staff and students have met over the past fortnight to consider the impact of the merger, which has involved the loss of casual support staff, the merger of schools and impending budget cuts.

There is also widespread concern over the introduction of the university's "Melbourne model", made up of three years of undergraduate study followed by a two-year, paid postgraduate degree, from 2011. Lecturers, who wish to remain anonymous out of concern about job security, say it is inappropriate for an institution renowned for its practical teaching methods.

One academic warns the changes risk turning VCA courses into "a porridge of creative arts" without any consultation with the staff. "The standard of arts in Victoria generally will suffer if there is any drop-off in standards at the VCA," she says. "Where is the benefit in destroying a respected national institution?"

The dean of the newly named faculty of the VCA and music, Sharman Pretty, confirms that under the model, 25 per cent of all courses will be made up of "breadth subjects" that have no connection to the main discipline.

There is also speculation that a critical studies course will take more time away from the arts course.

*This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2009/05/22/1242498921030.html>*

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