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Arts uni concept for VCA future

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February 13, 2010 - 12:00AM

THE EMBATTLED former Victorian College of the Arts should be transformed into an independent entity that would become Australia's world-class centre for arts education and training, says former Victorian arts minister Race Mathews.

In a joint submission to a review into the former college, Dr Mathews, former VCA advisory board chairmen Noel Turnbull and Lynne Landy, and the VCA's first administrator, Noel Denton, propose a new institution called the Australian University of the Arts, which would be supported with increased Commonwealth funding.

In the past year, faculty management has been "at war" with the community it should be serving, and has treated the controversy about changes at the former college as an issue to be managed rather than a manifestation of genuine concern, the joint submission states. "These actions range from the petty - the systematic stripping of the VCA name and emblem from everywhere within the faculty - to destruction of courses and staff reductions," it says.

The submission claims the public outcry - along with the failed Melbourne Business School merger - had had negative impact on the reputation of the former VCA and Melbourne University.

Mr Turnbull and Ms Landy, the wife of former Victorian governor John Landy, resigned from the college's advisory panel last year amid heated debate over the future of practical arts training at the former VCA, now the faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music.

Last November, the university announced a review of the faculty, led by former Telstra head Ziggy Switkowski.

Academics from the university's 115-year-old music faculty, which merged with the VCA last year, criticised the review process, saying the investigation into the future of the faculty was too focused on the VCA and ignored the "illustrious" contributions made by the former music faculty.

A submission from the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, supported the notion of the VCA as an independent institution, and calls on the uni to reinstate the college's name and logo.

Applying Melbourne University's curriculum model to the college would not be compatible with the practical training necessary to produce professional graduates, the industry group, Live Performance Australia, said in its submission.

University spokeswoman Christina Buckridge said all submissions would be considered by the review panel, according to the proper process.

Scott Dawkins, spokesman for Save the VCA, said students had little faith in the process.

This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/arts-uni-concept-for-vca-future-20100212-nxld.html>