

## THE AUSTRALIAN

### SCA dean Colin Rhodes steps down after student 'lock-out'



Sydney College of the Arts dean Colin Rhodes has resigned.

MICHAELA BOLAND THE AUSTRALIAN 12:00AM September 15, 2016

Three weeks after students locked the dean of the Sydney College of the Arts, Colin Rhodes, out of his office and made it impossible for him and other staff to return, he has unexpectedly stepped down after a decade heading the school.

As the students' occupation of SCA's administration building enters its fourth week, there is no obvious resolution in sight, with parent institution Sydney University refusing to negotiate with them.

The students are protesting against the university's decision to suspend student intake for a year in 2017 and move the school from 2018 to the main Camperdown campus, away from the Callan Park site in Rozelle, where it has been for 25 years.

They contend the move, which will result in staff losses, will curb the school's potential and stymie their ability to practise art in suitable studio spaces.

Some international students have launched legal action to recover their fees on the grounds that the university can no longer deliver the three-year, \$30,000 course it had advertised.

Professor Rhodes's exit comes four months before he was due to retire. A former teacher at the school, Margaret Harris, has agreed to act in the position until a permanent appointment can be made.

The students welcomed news of Professor Rhodes's exit as a victory that indicated "the university is buckling under the pressure of our campaign"

University of Sydney deputy vice-chancellor Stephen Barton said "the change in leadership at this time makes sense for us all"

Professor Barton said, "we think it is an educational advantage for students to come on main campus because they will be able to pick from more subjects and also main campus students will be able to take SCA subjects, so it will become much more embedded and unhampered by travel times."

The university also hopes to save \$1m a year spent running the site at Rozelle, in Sydney's inner west.

Champions of the SCA point to former NSW premier Mick Keeney's 1991 agreement with the university in which he acknowledged the significant costs associated with running an art school.

The NSW government gave the university title to the Law School building in Phillip St, Sydney city to help pay these costs.

The university sold the site for residential development for more than \$10 million.

"It's 25 years ago and things change and the vision pitched was the SCA, the Conservatorium and other arts institutions would be at Callan Park, successive governments did not deliver on that vision," Professor Barton said.

He also said art degree applications had declined by 32 per cent in NSW over the past five years and SCA student numbers were down 20 per cent.

"It's not the staff fault, it's a broader issue of supply and demand," he said.