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Arts college probe omits funding woes

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A REVIEW of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music has cast doubt on the future of the beleaguered institution because of a critical funding shortfall.

But the review, commissioned by the University of Melbourne and chaired by Ziggy Switkowski, fails to resolve the crucial question of funding.

It leaves that for the university to determine, much to the disappointment of the Save VCA group, which had hoped for a more definitive response.

Scott Dawkins, a VCA graduate and spokesman of the Save VCA group, said the review was a wasted opportunity and a debacle.

"Thanks for stating the obvious. We have got 16 pages of waffle which lets the university off scott free. It's telling us stuff we already know," Mr Dawkins said.

The VCA merged with the University of Melbourne in 2007, a highly controversial move which has attracted the ongoing ire of current and former students, and even former state arts ministers, who last year launched an unprecedented protest against the merger. In the wake of the protests, University of Melbourne vice-chancellor Glyn Davis commissioned the review late last year.

The review notes that the college operates with a budget deficit of at least \$6 million a year, a financial gap that is covered by the University of Melbourne under an agreement that expires at the end of 2011. What happens after that is anyone's guess.

"That's the question we have left to the university," Dr Switkowski said.

"What this report does is really say to the university, this is a really important set of human assets that they have, an institution that has done great things in the past and can do so again and it merits full-blooded university support," Dr Switkowski told *The Age* yesterday.

But in order to survive, the college will also need to attract funding from the state government, the federal government, the philanthropic and arts sectors, and through income earning outreach programs, the review states.

It also recommends that the college be split into two - the faculty of music and a faculty of art, performing arts, film and television.

This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/arts-college-probe-omits-funding-woes-20100513-v1xp.html>