

**MEDIA
RELEASE**

13 March 2008
Attention: Education and Political reporters
For Immediate Release

Attack on the Arts – who will be next?

Students are outraged at moves to shut down Film Studies and American Studies programmes at two New Zealand universities and are calling for this ill-considered attack on the Arts to be abandoned. The University of Canterbury proposes to remove both Film Studies and American Studies, while Victoria University plans to close Film Studies in its current form.

“We have grave concerns over the lack of process and transparency surrounding these proposals, and believe they are incredibly short-sighted and unjustifiable. They are an ominous sign of things to come – we’re left wondering who will be targeted next” said Liz Hawes, Co-President of the New Zealand Union of Students’ Associations (NZUSA).

The proposed closures were sprung on staff and students with no warning and little forethought, showing scant regard for stakeholder engagement.

“In an age of internationalisation where the United States is a significant global player, the contribution of American Studies to academia is vital. Film Studies at Victoria has an excellent reputation nationally and internationally for its’ programme offering theory and practical courses. The potential loss of such programmes is nonsensical and would be a travesty”, said Hawes.

“The government must take a stand against the institutions’ misuse of the tertiary reforms and the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF) as justifications for the closures, and urgently address the absolute inappropriateness of a competitive model in public tertiary education. It is clearly evident with the advent of these proposed changes that education and the good of the nation is no longer the priority for many public tertiary institutions, and government leadership to rectify this is vital”, said Hawes.

NZUSA supports the work of the University of Canterbury Students’ Association (UCSA) and the Victoria University of Wellington Students’ Association (VUWSA) in opposing these programme closures. NZUSA urges the government to take an immediate stand to protect the Arts as we know it.

ENDS

For further information contact NZUSA Co-President Liz Hawes on 027 486 8673