Statement of solidarity

Standing together for the future of art and design education

NSEAD stands in solidarity with UCU members at Goldsmiths taking industrial action to defend jobs, working conditions and the future of their university. As a trade union, professional association and learned society for art, craft and design educators, we believe that protecting education means valuing the people who make it possible. Educators, researchers, technicians and professional services colleagues sustain the knowledge, relationships and specialist learning environments on which creative education depends.

Goldsmiths has a significant place in the UK's cultural and creative life. Its contribution to art, design, visual culture and creative education extends far back. It has shaped generations of artists, educators, researchers and creative practitioners.

Art and design education is an interconnected community: schools, colleges, universities and cultural organisations depend on one another to develop practice, share research and nurture future educators. The loss of specialist expertise in one institution risks weakening that wider community.
We recognise the serious financial pressures facing higher education. Financial sustainability must, however, be pursued alongside a clear commitment to educational quality, meaningful consultation and fair treatment of staff. A university's future cannot be secured without the people who give it purpose.

We also recognise the disruption and uncertainty experienced by students. Their access to teaching, specialist support and assessment must be protected. Supporting staff and protecting students' education are not opposing commitments: both require an urgent and lasting resolution to this doom loop spiral of cuts and costly restructure.

We support colleagues' right to take lawful industrial action. We call on Goldsmiths management to work urgently with UCU towards a negotiated settlement that protects jobs and working conditions, addresses the disputed pay deductions and safeguards students' learning.

We stand with the staff and students seeking a sustainable future for Goldsmiths. The future of creative education depends on valuing the people, practices, and institutions that sustain it.

NSEAD President Andy Ash said:

"The relationship between an institution and its academic staff has implications for teaching, collegiality, morale, and the educational environment experienced by students. Where a university has developed a distinctive contribution to art education over many years, there is a responsibility to consider carefully how that legacy will be maintained. Reputation of any academic institution rests on the quality of its staff, the specificity of its expertise, the richness of its partnerships, and the experiences it makes possible for its students."

NSEAD Immediate Past President Marlene Wylie said:

As the first black president of NSEAD in its history, I am one of the many members for whom Goldsmiths College is a very special place, filled with memories of creative self-fulfilment and actualisation. I stand in solidarity with my colleagues who protect and champion this life-affirming, impactful institution. I stand in support of the lecturers who uphold the excellence and opportunities Goldsmiths College has provided, and continues to provide, for students now and into the future, if current plans for cuts and redundancies are reversed, signalling that creative education is vital to success and well-being nationally and internationally.

NSEAD General Secretary Michele Gregson said:

"Goldsmiths College is a very special place for many NSEAD members. I am amongst those who trained there, on the PGCE art and design course. I was surrounded by exceptional educators who set the absolute standard for excellence. Training at an institution so deeply steeped in creativity showed me that arts education isn't a luxury—it is a vital civic necessity. To starve the arts is to unravel our society. The current cuts to creative arts courses across the UK threaten the very fabric of our society, which is why we must fiercely protect and champion pioneering institutions like this one, which continue to lead the creative education landscape against the tide."