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ENC 2135

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December 4, 2023

Rhetorical Rationale

For my Multi-genre Persuasive Campaign, I centered my new genre compositions around the argument that Florida State University (FSU) should fund further research into COVID-19’s impacts on students, specifically delays in their academic careers. This was a continuation of the themes I focused on in my Investigative Field Essay and Rhetorical Analysis. For my genre compositions, I selected three that worked well in tandem to target my specific audiences. With my first audience being FSU Students, I developed an email to a random sample of FSU students with an attached 10 question survey. Both compositions were specific to students only. For my final audience and genre composition, I created a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation, to be presented to a research board at Florida State University, to gain funding for my research. This provided a second, more professional audience. Within my email, survey, and PowerPoint presentation, I utilized a combination of rhetorical strategies and appeals that were mostly successful with the corresponding specific audiences.

Within my first genre composition, an email to FSU students, I utilized pathos and logos to appeal to fellow students. The email begins with a message of season’s greetings, wishing everyone a “Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.” From the outset the email is utilizing an emotional appeal to those who celebrate not just Christmas, but other winter season holidays. This is to soften the otherwise bothersome email and to maintain reader interest. Additionally, addressing the audience as fellow “Seminoles” builds credibility as a peer. This is done to keep interest. This is followed with further deployment of pathos discussing the common story of FSU students negatively impacted by the pandemic. This line is used to trigger a negative memory and encourage students who were affected or know peers that were effected to help by participating in my survey. These emotional appeals are not the only rhetorical tools utilized. At the end of my message, I promised a $25 Visa gift card to five randomly selected participants. Here the logic is that if the recipients participate, they could be selected. The choice of a Visa gift card gives the participants freedom to purchase whatever they want, allowing as many students as possible to seek to participate to fully utilize the possible reward. One of the only flaws in this composition is I did not directly mention the length of the survey in the email. If I mentioned it as a brief ten question survey, then perhaps the intended audience of busy students would be more inclined to participate.

In my second genre composition, the survey I attached to the corresponding email, the genre conventions allow for limited but effective use of rhetorical strategies. To begin, the google form is colored in an FSU theme of garnet, red, and black. This is to generate credibility by again relating to the shared trait of Seminole spirit between the researchers and the respondents. Additionally, the bolded heading reading “for research purposes” is designed to convey a sense of legitimacy to any students who may have been skeptical of the email and survey’s authenticity. While the strategies used in the email were used to attract the student recipients to the survey, these strategies must be used to ensure its completion. This is why the first question of the survey is a simple yes or no. By structuring the survey in this manner, it is in fact a deployment of logos. If the respondents can quickly answer the first question, it is logical for them to assume the rest of the survey will be simple and easy to complete. Therefore, the audience of busy students will believe that the few minutes needed are worth the previously mentioned possible reward. Finally, some of the questions are framed in slightly emotional connotations, to receive an honest response from the respondents. Using words such as “negatively” and “positively” as possible responses, a discreet attempt is made at and subtle but present emotional appeal. The main flaw in the survey is the wide variety of question types. Some are just simple “yes” and “no” questions, while others involve drop down menus, free responses, the previously mentioned emotional language. While some diversity is good in a survey’s questions, in order to reach the audience in the most effective manner, some restructuring may be in order.

The final genre composition I selected addressed the second unique audience, a research board at FSU. Using a selection of the wide variety of tools possible in Microsoft’s PowerPoint software, ethos and logos are the main appeals deployed. When presenting to an academic research board, establishing your own credibility is a make-or-break task. This is done twofold within the presentation. There are direct citations and references to previous academic research done on the subject, followed with analysis and explanation of how my research project would further gain knowledge on the subject. Once again more subtly present is the garnet and gold color scheme, around which the whole presentation is designed. There is also a building of credibility in my acknowledgment of the previous steps FSU has taken surrounding COVID-19, which is done to effectively communicate my breadth of knowledge and mastery of the issue. For my logical appeals, it comes down to numbers. There is a reference to select data from the survey, followed by a table formatted cost breakdown of what exactly my desired research funds would be used for. The survey data is shown to prove the relevance of my prospective research, while the cost breakdown is to show the budgeted and relatively low-cost billing of my research. The itemized nature of the costs I present is designed to appeal to the more data literate and statistical focused audience of the academic research board. The presentation also contains graphic icons, to show creativity and maintain the interests of the audience. There is certainly room for improvement concerning some of the font choices. Almost all of the text is in a more aggressive, bold font. Typically, there would be a contrast between headings and other text, but in my composition, it may be difficult to distinguish. In addition, the transitions utilized between slides may need to be simpler, to match the more formal setting and serious audience of the presentation.

Overall, my genre compositions contain purposeful rhetorical devices used to fit with each composition’s usual conventions. The email, survey, and research composition serve to advance the cause of further research surrounding COVID-19 and its impacts on students. They achieve this while messaging to two separate audiences, randomly selected FSU students, and a designated research board composed of faculty and administration at FSU. The compositions are mostly effective, yet each contains its own specific traits which can be improved upon. While not perfect, the compositions are rhetorically sound and in totality, effective.