November 28, 2023,

Dear *Office of Undergraduate Admissions*,

Our ENGE 1216 class involved a project that tackled an issue with higher education. From the perspective of an affected students, we used academic peer reviewed journals to both rhetorically analyze and propose a solution. My project was about Transferability of Credits from one institution to another. While researching about the issue, I’ve learned that the loss of credits for students is universal across most institutions across the US and the rate of credit loss is on the order of a semester of classes. I’ve also learned that the topic of transfer credit acceptance is very divided. Through this project I was able to carefully pick out up-to-date and strong statistics, as well as well-placed counterarguments to prove that the loss of transfer credits is an issue for students who are financially incapable, struggling with courses, or are trying to take specific programs exclusively offered. Lastly I’ve learned that there are many ways authors can control their rhetorical strategies for the content they are presenting and the audience they are presenting to. These insights are extremely important because it allows me to approach a problem from an unbiased way, while also being rhetorically adept at showing my experience with the issue and regard for the opposing arguments. The skill developed from this allows me to avoid jumping to conclusions or making incomplete claims which is valuable for keeping me safe and trustworthy. It also gives me the power to present and claim solutions to problems.

Credit loss has been a problem for more than 20 years and as such there are always claims on the internet where old statistics are used for modern documents. This simply isn’t true because there could have been significant change over the years that change the magnitude and meaning of the statistic. This has been my struggle in this project, the availability of up-to-date information on the issue of credit loss. This really limits the amount of academically peer reviewed articles I can use to bolster my arguments. To solve this issue, I used broad research articles that span a large timeframe that would include up to date research as well as some statistics from previous years so I could compare. I’ve also been very careful about selecting sources from outside the library database to make sure they are up to date and correct. I ended up choosing a survey for one of my hook documents as it contained up-to-date statistics. If I had to do this project over again I would not change anything because I’m passionate about the issue of credit transfer as a student who has lost 17 credits and must retake a couple notably difficult Mechanical Engineering courses. As the topic is important, I feel it is better to go over something important and hard than less important and easy. It makes a bigger impact if it is something I’m motivated about.

Virginia Tech expects learning outcomes to be accomplished from their offered writing courses. For this project I’ve covered three outcomes. One is Rhetorical knowledge, the second is the writing process (specifically research), and the third is Genre Conventions. In this project I’ve been able to identify more complex rhetorical strategies such as Exigence, Audience, and Constraints that allow rhetorical writers to appeal to larger groups of audience members. Specifically in my project, the use of Constraints (for Pathos) has allowed the authors in the peer reviewed academic journals to take on a more formal and trustworthy tone. A lot of this project involved researching using checked sources and the ability to identify material as trustworthy. I have gained the experience to research without cherry picking for what would like to be seen, rather I would research with trusted information and make claims based on both sides. Lastly the modal shift in the paper has allowed me to practice Genre conventions including MLA formatting such as in text citations, references and citation order, paper formatting such as section breaks to indicate a shift in style, and I’ve learned how to incorporate the writing style of my peer reviewed article as inspiration for the writing of my paper. These outcomes are very important to Virginia Tech students because it gives the students the power to express their ideas and have their ideas be accepted by the most amount of people possible. Without rhetorical knowledge, the writing process, and genre conventions (Including the other learning outcomes for the class) the student’s work would not be viewed as reliable or worth agreeing to. Learning outcomes give students the communication skills necessary to get the help they need, fix problems around them, and help others.

For university students, rhetorical awareness is crucial. The reason academic writing is generally more credible and trustworthy is due to the authors in those works utilizing rhetoric effectively, and using very good formatting that allows for easy fact checking. Making claims without a basis is what causes a lot of media on social media platforms to be uncredible, due to the lack of easy fact checking. When students write while being rhetorically aware, the students can write for a specific audience, shift the tone of their writing to match the content, and remain professional. The end goal for everyone is for their opinion to be heard and accepted. For democratic and civic processes, opinions are strictly accepted under certain conditions. These processes also allow for large important decisions to be conducted allowing for change to fix problems. If someone can effectively use all the strategies developed in this course and has a systematic way of communicating and backing up their claims, their opinion in a democratic or civic process will more likely be accepted. This also forms a leadership role which allows for people to have the power to change things for the better. I hope that through the process of carefully writing with a rhetorical eye and with proper MLA formatting, I will be able to help Transfer Student retain their hard earned credits, and for institutions to retain degree integrity.

Sincerely,

Nathan Fikes