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Rhetorical Analysis of the Computer Science & Engineering Department

The Computer Science and Engineering Department displayed promise in terms of providing a persuasive argument, at first glance. The reader is greeted with the department’s achievements and is reassured by the confident tone within the writing. Also, the webpage utilizes rhetorical devices, such repetition, to reinforce the department’s claim of their reliability to the students. This powerful and controlled wording proved effective as it caught all of our attention. With a simple inspection of Merced’s CSE website, the claim can clearly be identified right away: “Computer Science and Engineering students at UC Merced will work with the top computer scientists and engineers in the world”. According to the university’s website, the Computer Science and Engineering Department provides various benefits; preparing students, so they’ll become successful with understanding the fast paced and innovative future. Even though this was the presented claim, the department relied primarily upon strong feeling and optimism in order to entice prospective students and ultimately failed to provide evidence to support their claims throughout the admissions website for the Computer Science and Engineering department of UC Merced.

It was not complicated to go through the website and focus on all of the areas where ethos was evidently being presented. The specific diction and tone that was being used created a reliable atmosphere; drawing in the reader’s attention by presenting their claims with a strong sense formality, such as the second sentence on the admissions webpage: “Our faculty has developed a program of study that combines practical exposure to the most modern technologies available, with a theoretical foundation that will empower students to master future changes and innovation as technologies continue to evolve at an astonishing pace”. By utilizing such strong vocabulary, the reader is convinced that the authors of the webpage are well-informed, giving the website, as a whole, a feeling of credibility. The appeal to ethos is effective because it reassures the reader that the author(s) are well versed in this subject, making them more prone to accepting the claims that follow. Also, the UC system is highly prestigious on its own accord, lending its own credibility to that of the department. The system has established this prestige through its high quality of education and dedication to research. This website/department has increased credibility due to the fact that it has been approved by the University of California, which a great majority of people are familiar with and trust. Also, since the website’s intention is to come off as sounding professional and formal, the author does not use any pronouns with the exception of “our” when addressing the university’s students. By using formal language to create ethos, in coordination with the credibility that the UC system provides, it would be easy to understand that many prospective students would believe that this department is dependable and capable of providing them with a great education, making UC Merced’s CSE department a very desirable program to be a part of. The diction used within the webpage is effective in furthering the argument that Computer Science and Engineering is the correct major for many students looking for higher level education..

Besides the use of ethos, the authors also uses repetition to convey their point more strongly. The authors provide a mission statement at the bottom of the page that outlines the abilities that graduates at UC Merced will demonstrate upon graduation:

1. *An ability to apply knowledge of computing and mathematics appropriate to the discipline;*
2. *An ability to analyze a problem and identify the computing requirements appropriate for its solution,*
3. *An ability to design, implement, and evaluate a computer-based system, process, component, or program to meet desired needs;*
4. *An ability to analyze the local and global impact of computing on individuals, organizations, and society;*

The use of repetition in this context is to amplify the point being presented. In this case, the word “ability” is repeated multiple times to exemplify that the graduates will be extremely well prepared to work in the field of Computer Science and Engineering. This reinforcement of key statements acts to persuade the reader into believing that, among all of the CSE programs available, UC Merced’s is among the most potent in teaching its students.

Rather than providing any opposing views, the website focuses on only the positive benefactors in order to portray the major as more appealing: “From introductory programming courses through architecture design experiences, and research and team project activities, our students gain insights that allow them to excel throughout their chosen career path”. The webpage only indicates that if a student were to go through with this major, their future will be positively impacted, and they fail to provide any evidence or claims against this. It is easy to understand why they would not provide any data in contradiction to the success of the CSE department because their main objective is to attract prospective students. The author/authors of this website are strongly using word choice to their advantage; persuading more and more students into majoring in Computer Science and Engineering. There is an obvious bias throughout the webpage, simply due to the fact that it is representing the University of Merced and their main objective is to lure students rather than repel them.

From the very beginning of the webpage, the webpage starts off with a claim by stating that students majoring in Computer Science and Engineering will be working with some of the greatest scientists and engineers in the world. Strategically using a claim as their first sentence causes readers to become interested as to what is being stated throughout the entire webpage, it catches the attention of interested readers, convincing them into reading the rest of the webpage. Also, the authors, by providing topic headings throughout the webpage, make sure the readers are able to identify which sections will best suit what they are searching for. Not only do these headings prevent unnecessary clustering, they also draw attention to certain aspects that they want to emphasize. In providing these headings, which include key words such as “overview,” “careers,” and “learning outcomes,” the authors prepare the readers for the subsequent information.This formating also allows the readers to either find key pieces of information that they were already looking for or can entice readers to continue looking throughout the homepage. The structure of the webpage aids in the effectiveness of the authors’ argument.

The structure of the text, however, is a bit misleading due to the fact that it continuously makes claims without even providing specific evidence. This case is shown within the text as according to the Stanford Credibility Research of 1999 and 2002, a part of the Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab, most individuals react positively to information which comes off as genuine and provides direct sources or certifiable claims. From this research survey of approximately 3,000 tested individuals from the U.S and Europe, a majority responded negatively to uncited information and lack of clarity and increased skepticism. This negative response can be present within this department page as they make the claim that their program helps to guide students into success, yet they do not provide any success rate statistics to support their claims.

Throughout the entire webpage, the University throws out a various amount of claims without ever providing any solid type of evidence, such as statistics. The author/authors of the webpage do not ever bother bringing up any opposing views, but they instead focus on only the positive areas in order to attract more students into the Computer Science and Engineering department. Even when concluding the final paragraph, the webpage states that students will be able to succeed immensely in the future, so long as they pursue this certain major. By playing with the emotions of desperate college students, they are able to adjust and manipulate the way we feel towards the idea of Computer Science and Engineering. It gives us the false hope of being able to do whatever we want in the future, because the webpage states we will be successful no matter what job position we decide to take. If the webpage were to provide any type of evidence, they may have perhaps had a chance of being considered more reliable and less biased. Although this prod can be easily seen through by others not in college or the school system, its target audience of freshmen/transfer students are highly susceptible to this kind of rhetoric and can be influenced to link with the CSE department and/or possibly change their major.

Works Cited

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Dear Bay,

Thank you for your feedback on our essay. While reading through your review on the essay, we took your advice and made some revisions in order to further provide clarity and depth. When you were talking about process language on the first page, we have noticed that our writing lost some of its relevance as we had taken too much time describing our analysis process and the steps we had taken during our research. By removing this type of language and focusing primarily on the analysis, we have made our paragraphs transition more smoothly and were no longer providing an unnecessary narrative.. On the second page, we were able to relate formal language and how it leads students to their majors, by clarifying how the formal language is used to help persuade the students to choose their major. We stated that this new formal language influence the students to recognize the UC’s prestige and base the quality of the CSE program off of that initial impression. We realized that our essay primarily focused on the rhetorical devices, but did not provide any input on why the University would take such actions or further describe their motive/goal. On the third page, we added detail to the fact that the university website would not want to contradict itself, as well as looked upon unfavorably. We also fixed the issue with using the repetitive phrase“the article,”and went to change it to “the webpage,” which clearly refers to the CSE webpage. Initially, we were missing a works cited page which would have made lessened our essay’s credibility. To rectify this, we also added the works cited page to include the sources that we used, such as the details from Stanford Credibility Research. Thank you again for reviewing our essay and giving us feedback to improve our essay!

Sincerely,

Codey, Josh, Majok, and Tyler