

Rhetorical Analysis: UCA Commitment

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In early September the University of Central Arkansas had a major announcement for incoming students at the new Windgate Center for Fine and Performing Arts. In this announcement it was discussed that the UCA Now campaign had raised \$109 million ending the campaign ten months earlier than scheduled. UCA says that this money will go to a program that will create a path for all new incoming freshmen to graduate debt free from the university (UCA, 2023). For this rhetorical analysis the main page for the UCA Commitment is what will be analyzed. Ethos, Pathos, and Logos are the cornerstones of the rhetorical strategy of persuasion and the lens used for this rhetorical analysis. They were very evident and effective in the UCA Commitment page. Through clear goals, money figures, persuasive uses of language and an excellent use of ethos, pathos, and logos the UCA Commitment page is intentionally trying to grasp the attention of all students who were considering not attending a college due to financial issues. I used these to further my analysis of the UCA Commitment page. This paper will examine the rhetorical choices used to create this home page for this program.

Persuasion is one of the main foundations of rhetoric. The rhetoric used in the UCA Commitment has a clear use of persuasion for the ultimate goal of increasing the number of potential incoming freshmen. The saying that ‘money talks’ is very evident in this writing. Essentially this saying means the more money the more power. It is clear that the amount of money that UCA is pouring into this program will definitely open some eyes and peak interest. Throwing around huge figures such as 109 million dollars and phrases such as “debt free” and “household income of \$100,000 or less” is the quickest way to persuade people in this day in age. Especially in a capitalistic society where money is essentially everything (UCA, 2023). Money and finances is a common topic throughout this page, and is a major point of persuasion. In the beginning of the page UCA states that major financial problems are facing many families.

Not only the rising costs of college, but almost everything else we consume. Positive figures of money are not the only times finances are mentioned. Later in the page in the letter from the President the average amount of student debt accumulated is mentioned. It is shown that UCA is aware of the \$4,000 debt that the average student accumulates in debt by the end of their academic journey. This honesty and awareness of student debt is one of the excellent examples of ethos used in the UCA Commitment page. These uses of honesty and statistics are a great use of not only logos, but ethos as well.

The UCA Commitment page has a clear use of ethos throughout the page through many with many obvious and not as clear examples. UCA is very open and concise with their goals for their incoming students. They have a brief, yet very important set of three major goals listed. These are near the top of the page making them impossible to miss, which one must assume was intentional. These three goals listed are to transform, empower, and foster equal access. These goals are very broad in my opinion and cover a wide range of potential worries for students considering this university. The rhetorical choice was smart to make these goals minimal, concise, relatable, and achievable goals. Included as well on this page is a letter from the President of UCA, Houston Davis. In this letter not only is Davis' presence of writing an appeal to credibility and integrity of this program, it is what is written that shows the true rhetoric of this page. The letter begins with a context of the UCA Commitment program and its grassroots origin. Mentioning how this idea of creating a path for graduating students to leave this university without student debt came from within small campus groups. Adding this into the letter showed immense rhetoric in many ways. Mentioning how these ideas came from students originally shows how UCA and President Davis take student ideas seriously and listen to what the consensus of the student body wants. Having a university that listens to the needs of students

is a major persuasive factor for incoming students as well as students on the fence of deciding which university they will attend.

Not only was a clear use of ethos and logos used to push the rhetorical agenda in this page for UCA Commitment, pathos was sprinkled throughout this page and as well as President Davis' letter. Constantly mentioned throughout the page are phrases around students not considering pursuing a college degree due to financial issues or students not coming from the best socio-economic backgrounds. It is even mentioned in the third goal earlier in the page of fostering equal access. UCA claims to promote that they want to induce socio-economic growth, through allowing students who are not financially privileged to attend a university. This is something that definitely appeals to the emotions of those in previous generations who were denied the opportunity to attend college due to financial limitations. As well as talk about student loans, something almost every college student can relate to. Typically these reactions are in an emotional and negative way. Using these relatable and sincere examples and word choices are excellent uses of rhetoric and incredibly persuasive.

Rhetoric is known in simple terms as the art of persuasion. There are many different ways to use rhetoric and it takes many different forms as well. Universities are familiar with the art of rhetoric and how to use rhetorical techniques and strategies to its advantage. Whether it is to convince potential students considering their university for their higher education, or students who weren't even considering college. The UCA Commitment program uses rhetoric for both of these purposes. Especially for students who thought college was out of reach due to a number of reasons, especially financial. The UCA Commitment about page uses rhetorical strategies of data and statistics, finances, a debt free promise as well as many other uses mentioned previously in

this essay. The use of openness and honesty about real problems college students face and then giving their solutions to these issues through rhetoric is not only persuasive but impressive.

References

University of Central Arkansas. (2023). *University Central Arkansas commitment*.

<https://uca.edu/commitment/overview/>