

Running Header: Weigh the Waste

Rhetorical Analysis: Weigh the Waste

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Every day in the city of Denver one out of every six people is “food insecure” (The Campus Kitchens Project). Being “food insecure” means that a person does not have access to adequate food, and are unsure where the next meal is coming from, and when they will have it. There is also a growing trend of excess food waste in Denver, and more specifically in the University of Denver’s (DU’s) dining halls. When faced with the issue of excess amounts of food being wasted in DU’s dining halls, it is apparent that this could easily be addressed by an educational campaign, which could trigger a shift in our audience’s mindset.

To truly understand this campaign, it is important to be aware of the rhetorical situation in detail. For this campaign my group and I are the rhetor’s. We are taking the stance of concerned students. The audience we are looking to persuade is the DU student body, staff, faculty, and catering company. We are trying to persuade them to be more conscientious of the amount of food they take and the waste they create.

The average college student generates about 142 pounds of food waste every year (The Campus Kitchens Project). That is the number of pounds of perishable food put on student’s plates, just to end up in the garbage untouched. Our frame of this issue strategically focuses on the benefits of change, instead of the cost of sacrifices. In this sense we are not telling people to eat less, we are conveying this message, “take as much food as you will finish.” With this in mind, we chose to frame this issue using an educational campaign, focusing specifically on hungry people. The goal of our campaign is simple. Inform our audience of the issue, create “talk” about the solutions that are already on campus, and educate our audience about the difference they can make.

After identifying our target audience, it is important for us to understand them. The ideal way to persuade someone is by truly understanding them. Our group brainstormed about what our target audience truly values. By doing this, we established the best ways to use ethos, pathos, and logos to move our audience. In regards to the group of our audience that are students and educators we decided this demographic is an educated target. Our audience is busy and they value convenience. Our audience also values the reality of making a difference. With these two significant values as guiding principles, our efforts to validate their contribution would be necessary to get them to participate.

My group and I value the activism that happens at DU. We decided that creating more “talk” about student activism has the potential to make the student body feel that their choices are making a difference. Prior to being in this class our group was unaware of the Food Recovery Network. The Food Recovery Network is an organization on campus that forwards unserved food leftover in the dining halls to a Homeless shelter in Denver. This is an extraordinary remedy already on campus that is not being utilized to its full potential. Our group decided that increasing students’ awareness of the potential good untaken food can do, could lead to a decrease in the amount of food wasted. Furthermore, this information about the Food Recovery Network also minimizes our audience’s possible pre-conceived notion that their actions don’t make a difference. By clearly and simply informing our audience that food insecure people would be fed as a result of making smarter choices, our campaign hopes to change the mindsets of our audience.

For this campaign we chose the poster format as our genre. We took the advice from a mentor text to make this decision. D. Mathew Godfrey and Patrick Feng, authors of, *Communicating Sustainability: Student perceptions of a behavior change campaign*, have advised, “Convenience is necessary (...) to them [target audience] buying and consuming a meal

must be completed as quickly, painlessly and effortlessly as possible” (Mathew & Feng). They go on to detail how students perceived reading posters that were filled with information as an inconvenience. To combat this issue, we formatted our posters with big letters and simple sentences. This layout makes it easy for our audience to comprehend quickly. The simple sentences make it easy to understand the issue and introduce the solution as a gain instead of a sacrifice.

This campaign includes rhetorical appeals; ethos, logos, and pathos. When these posters are hung in dining halls, our target audience won’t know who created these posters. With this in mind, it became imperative for us to make wise decisions on the design of our posters in order for us to gain credibility and create the desired impact. We gain credibility by putting the Food Recovery Network label on the poster. By doing this, our audience will have immediate knowledge of the source for the information on the poster. This removes any unwarranted suspicion. Beyond providing a credible campaign, it is also important for the audience to trust the information on the posters. To gain our audience’s trust, we use precise language. The head of our posters read, “Did you know?” This language is very passive. It removes the assumption that we know our audiences background information on the subject.

Our campaign also includes the rhetorical appeal of logos. The purpose of logos is to convince the audience using facts. Our posters say, “Unserved food leftover in the dining halls is brought to The Denver Rescue Mission, a homeless shelter in our community.” In this statement we provide the fact of where the food goes. We are specific. We don’t just say a homeless shelter. Instead we say the exact homeless shelter. This fact can be easily checked by our audience as a result of including the Food Recovery Network label.

Through the use of pathos, we want our audience to feel empowered to make smarter decisions. In doing this, we are connecting them to the to the solution through language. Instead of saying that the Food Recovery Network brings the food to “a” homeless shelter we are elaborating and continuing with, in “*our*” community. This brings the issue closer to home. We also took the advice, once again, from D. Mathew Godfrey and Patrick Feng. They warned future campaigns of change not to rely too heavily on pathos. When pathos is too aggressive it makes the audience feel manipulated. To avoid this reaction, we chose to put images on our posters that reflect tasty meals instead of starving children. This decision makes our rhetoric less obvious, which makes it easier for the audience to accept.

Rhetorical timing is key in our campaign. With regard to exigence, this issue is urgent because people are hungry now. There are also solutions already in place. That being said, there is no better time to inform our audience of the programs combatting the issue. Contrarily, the Kairos of our campaign comes from the strategic planning of where the posters are placed. Our group decided that it is important to place these posters directly past the entrance of all the dining halls. This placement makes it convenient for our audience to read. This placement also results in our audience becoming better informed about what happens to untouched food, before they put food on their plate. The hope is that, if our audience has this information fresh in their mind, they will be more mindful about the portions of food they take on their plates.

When faced with the issue of excess amounts of food being wasted in the DU dining halls and the startling number of people who are food insecure on a daily basis in Denver, it became clear that a rhetorical campaign was necessary to educate our audience on the issue in order to change our audience’s habits. As a group we are confident that this educational campaign does a commendable job of connecting our audience to the issue and showing them that the choices they make have the potential of creating a greater impact. Student activism, already available on

campus, can become more effective in informing the student body of the real cost of taking more than they will eat.

Weigh The Waste Works Cited

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