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Rationale Statement: Project Flashlight

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The following are rhetorical concepts that were used in our Common Good Project:

Project Flashlight, in order to enhance our overall argument that mental illness among college students is an important and prevalent issue in today's social climate that needs to be addressed.

1) Ethos – A rhetorical concept interpreted by Heinrichs based on Aristotle definition means, “argument by character” (Heinrichs, 2017, p. 40). In our project we are able to establish credibility by providing background information about who we are, what we are studying at Longwood, and why we care about mental health. All three team members has been impacted by mental illness in some way. Additionally, in our future career paths, we will likely work with individuals who experience difficulties with their mental health. Ethos also came into play on our Testimonies page. Our Testimonies page features a video that presents different stories and experiences from college students about their battle with mental illness. This shows potential audience members that mental illness among college students is a prevalent issue. By collecting outside testimonies, we were able to show that many of our peers do experience mental health issues first hand.

2) Logos – Logos is one of Aristotle’s three principles of persuasion. Heinrichs refers to this as, “argument by logic” where different facts, comparisons, and statistics are used to strengthen one’s argument (2017, p. 40). The “Research” page of our website provided statistics and rates of increasing mental illness on college campuses. The data shows the audience that this is a prevalent issue that is occurring more than we may realize. Results from various research studies were also included on this page that included the incident percentages of different illnesses, college dropout rates, and the percentage of students who did not know about the resources available to them. Logos was also used in the “About Mental Illness” page by providing definitions of common mental illnesses and their symptoms.

3) Pathos – Pathos is one of Aristotle’s three principles of persuasion. Heinrichs refers to this as “argument by emotion” (Heinrichs, 2017, p. 40). This is when an individual pulls at the audience’s heart strings in attempt to elicit an emotional response. Pathos was used throughout our project as mental health is a grave concern on college campuses. Many people relate to this topic through their own experience or through someone that they know. We used our testimonies page in order to gain an emotional appeal. On this page we provided paragraphs from individuals who had experienced mental illness during their time in college. Along with this, we created a video using quotes and phrases from those individuals who were brave enough to share their stories. The song that we chose for our video was about mental illness and releasing the demons and darkness that is connotated with mental illness. It is important to note that at the end of our video, we provide hope and inspiration for those experiencing mental illnesses, that they can overcome them and prosper in life.

4) Code grooming – A rhetorical tool that allows you to use, “insider language to get an audience to identify with you and your idea” (Heinrichs, 2017, p. 251). This was used in the

overview page on our website where we used specific language that can relate to the average life of a college student so that they can identify with the overall argument. Code grooming promotes a sense of group identity and shows that the creators of the website can relate to common stressors of everyday college life because we are experiencing them now.

5) Decorum- A rhetorical device used when, “your audience finds you agreeable if you meet their expectations” (Heinrichs, 2017, p. 47). Our website meets the expectations of the audience because we are able to provide factual information along with personal experiences. We provide a number of resources so that the audience is able to find the help that they need. One major aspect of our website that added to decorum was our “Questions to Ask a Mental Health Hotline.” This is something that the audience may not be expecting however, it goes above and beyond their expectations, drawing them into our website further so that they are guided through the process of getting help. The questions also provide a sense of identity so that they are not alone as they are common questions that those experiencing mental illness may ask a therapist, counselor, or hotline. The website itself is presented and formatted in a professional manner. The formatting of the website makes it easier for a user to navigate. The language used throughout the website is easy to read and understand as definitions were provided for terms that may not have been understood.

6) Kairos – A rhetorical tool that uses, “rhetorical timing, as an ability to seize the persuasive moment” (Heinrichs, 2017, p. 281). We are urging that action is needed now and notifying the audience that this is going to continue to increase and become a larger epidemic if we continue to bypass it. Mental illness is a prominent topic in today’s society. We decided to specifically focus on the presence of mental illness among college students because it is a topic that not many individuals tend to talk about. Using the right medium also enhanced our Kairos. Our website is

accessible to anyone with internet access and presents our argument in an unique and interactive manner.

7) Caring –A rhetorical tool that means you care, “about the audience’s interests rather than your own” (Heinrichs, 2017, p. 57). The overall project used this term because the main goal was to help our audience rather than ourselves. On our “How to Get Help” page on the website, we provided many ways for individuals suffering from mental illness to seek help. With these resources they have the ability to speak with a qualified professional, talk to them over the phone, or share their personal experience with other individuals through a website. Another major section involved on the help page was a self-assessment for those who may be concerned that they have a mental illness. All the sources provided were used in order to benefit the visitors of the website.

8) Storytelling – This is a rhetorical tool that Heinrichs explains in the text that can be used to enhance the appeal to pathos. Heinrichs argues, “the best way to change an audience’s mood; make it directly involve you or your audience” (Heinrichs, 2017, p. 87). This device was used in our video, where we incorporated the anonymous testimonies provided by students from Longwood and other universities. The students were able to share their stories about how they view their mental illness, what helped them, and advice to other college students who battle mental illness.

9) Deductive logic – This is a rhetorical device used to control an argument. Deductive reasoning is employed when a general argument or premise is made and specific examples or “proof” are used to support the overall claim (Heinrichs, 2017, p. 140). Deduction was used in our video. Our video began with the general claim that your stories and experiences with mental illness do not define you. Following this claim, different quotations from our peers’ testimonies

were used as specific examples (proof) to support our argument. To reiterate our claim, we used the quote “I am still me, regardless of my mental health” at the end of our video.

10) Metonymy – Metonymy is a useful figure that is used to transform the way the audience thinks. According to Heinrichs, metonymy, “takes a characteristic of something and makes it stand for the whole” (2017, p. 222). Metonymy was used in the overall creation of Project Flashlight. This is reflected in our title as we recognize the characteristics of a flashlight and utilize them to shine light on mental illness among college students. We also use a dark background with pops of color for graphics and texts. This also illuminates major aspects of our topic and website.

Works Cited

Heinrichs, Jay. Thank You for Arguing. 3rd ed., Three Rivers Press, 2017.