
Communication Student Scholarship

Communication

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It's That Time Again...

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It's That Time Again...

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It was that time of year again- a time when legislatures gather to hear the Governor convey his budget proposal to the state. A time when a cloud of confusion hovers in my mind. A time that I cringe when I hear about taxes; they're complicated, and as a student, they're not too relevant in my daily life, although they will be soon.

So there I was, one seemingly unknowledgeable youngster in a room of politically intelligent professionals listening to a speech that mostly went over my head. As I glanced around the room, nearly every individual sat on the edges of their seats with pens poised in their hands. The room was alive with whispers of anticipation. Ink rapidly spilled onto disheveled notepads and laptop keys pounded every second Governor Wolf uttered another word. Every sound in the room reminded me of the importance of the budget address, so despite my inability to comprehend everything Governor Wolf proposed, I tuned in and evaluated the speech with the eyes and ears of a communication student.

As I intently listened to the speech, I noticed that Governor Wolf's delivery captivated me more than his language and words. In my rhetorical theory and communication theory classes, I learned that delivery is powerful; it can move audiences to believe the message when done correctly. When the speaker appears confident, knowledgeable about the content of the speech, and sincere, the speaker conveys more power and credibility.

Evaluating the speech as a whole, Governor Wolf is an effective communicator. Here are the elements of Governor Wolf's budget proposal that convinced me of his credibility as a speaker.

Nonverbal gestures

Governor Wolf's posture conveyed confidence and power. He barely glanced at his notes, so his eyes were constantly engaged with the audience, thus forming connection. He did not use his hands excessively, which can be distracting. Rather, Governor Wolf used his hands to emphasize main points.

Identification

Governor Wolf appealed to his audience emotionally by conveying understanding. He empathized with the audience by sharing the story of a single mother and teacher who no longer works full time due to underfunding at her school. This spending plan though, he urged, will provide a better life for all workers in the educational setting.

Word choices

Governor Wolf's speech was a balance of positive and negative word choices. He began with negative words, like sluggish economy and deficit to show the setbacks of the current economic conditions. After articulating his spending plan, he transitioned to the use of positive word choices, like restore, increase, start, fight for, and create.

Anaphora

By repeating phrases, Governor Wolf created a sense of urgency about future economic needs. Many clauses began with hopeful, repeated statements like "we need to..." and "we can do better." By repeating these encouraging phrases, audiences believe Governor Wolf's statements and propositions for a hopeful future.

There are many public speaking tactics that communication students can learn from this speech. By paying careful attention to these rhetorical strategies, I have learned the power of speaking confidently and purposefully. You just have to sell your thoughts and believe them, really.

As Governor Wolf says, it's just that simple.