

A Glance at Information Literacy

By Don Sutherland

At the beginning of each semester, I give my BBA 407 (strategic management) students a diagnostic exam. In part, the diagnostic exam is used to help evaluate the extent of student learning at the end of the semester.

In addition, the diagnostic exam may contain topical questions that have relevance beyond measuring end-of-semester student learning. With “fake news” becoming among the most topical stories over the past year-and-a-half, the diagnostic exam included a set of questions aimed at assessing whether students could differentiate between factual statements and expressions of opinion.

The questions were taken from the Pew Research Center’s “[Quiz: How well can you tell factual from opinion statements?](#)” Five statements were expressions of fact. Five were expressions of opinion.

Nationwide, respondents to Pew’s quiz were able to correctly identify 3.3/5.0 factual statements and 3.6/5.0 opinion statements. As Pew’s respondents included persons who had not studied or completed college in their mix, one would reasonably expect that a class of fourth year college students would do better.

In fact, that’s what happened. My class correctly identified an average of 4.0/5.0 factual statements and 4.3/5.0 opinion statements.