Abstract:

This article describes the development of a framework to help teach students how to identify numerical deception in political claims. Seven categories of numerical deception emerged from a review of deceptive political claims analyzed by FactCheck.org and PolitiFact.com. The categories are: cherry-picking, excessive rounding, speculating, ignoring perspective, using imprecise terms, manipulating denominators, and presuming causation. Each category is described, and an example is shown, as well as cues that may alert someone to a potential deception. Practical ideas are then described about how to use the framework for teaching, based on four semesters of incorporating it into a general education, math-for-liberal-arts course. This includes principles adopted, assignments, assessments, and lessons learned.

Marcus Jorgensen is an associate professor of developmental mathematics at Utah Valley University, where he has been since 2007. He is a frequent presenter at conferences with a research interest in the college freshman mathematics curriculum. Prior to UVU, he served as dean of computing, mathematics, and science at Spokane Falls Community College. He has a BS (ocean engineering option) from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, MA in liberal studies (science) from Wesleyan University, MS (instructional and performance technology) from Boise State University, and a PhD (education) from Utah State University. Marc is a retired U.S. Coast Guard officer.