

[#Career Advice \(/advice\)](#)

Instructors, Please Wash Your Hair

In these trying times, the last thing that students need to see is their professional, highly educated professor falling apart at the seams, argues Kristie Kiser.

April 16, 2020

[72 COMMENTS \(/ADVICE/2020/04/16/TEACHING-ONLINE-SHOULD-NOT-MEAN-PRESENTING-YOURSELF-LESS-PROFESSIONALLY-OR#DISQUS_THREAD\)](#)



[. \(https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/styles/large/public/media/busy-businesswoman-vector-id609692550-2.jpg?itok=zRjTDdUy\)](https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/styles/large/public/media/busy-businesswoman-vector-id609692550-2.jpg?itok=zRjTDdUy)

ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/AKINDO

We're all guilty. We've read the social media posts, deliberated about it on discussion boards and rather earnestly adopted it: the misguided philosophy that we should present ourselves as ordinary people during this time of crisis to be more relatable to our students. It is baffling how the definition of "ordinary" somehow became bastardized, now representing something different -- something less organized, less professional,



As educators, we have a responsibility to our students to teach them to be problem solvers, critical thinkers and professionals. We must demonstrate the expectations of good citizenship. We must provide consistency and continuity in a time when all else is uncertain. Our students need structure. They need routine. They need to know that they are a priority. They need responsible adults to demonstrate the proper way to respond to adversity and challenges. We must demonstrate how to show respect.

Imagine if you were an executive, eager to demonstrate the value of your company's services to an important client. Would you show up unwashed, overly casual and ill prepared for a meeting? It would be unfathomable to imagine such -- no matter what was going on in the world around you. Our students are our clients, and we must exhibit professionalism.

In a world where conversations around us are terrifying, a student who has perceived Dr. Jones as a strong female role model, who is polished and eloquent at all times in the classroom, may be quite alarmed indeed to find Dr. Jones wearing her Pokémon pajamas with disheveled, unwashed hair, lamenting the added workload associated with social distancing. Your piles of unattended laundry are not trophies for the amount of time you are putting into your coursework. They are distractions, signs of disorganization and, quite frankly, unsightly and off-putting. Educators, please rethink your approach to your students. In these trying times, the last thing that they need to see is their adult, professional, highly educated instructor falling apart at the seams.

Safeguarding Our Standards

Changing your expectations for your students is equally as disheartening. Of course, we must be patient as our students adapt to an online environment. We must also be more sympathetic than ever to changing socioeconomic factors, and we must be ready and willing to help students navigate any barriers they're confronting. What we must not do is cheapen the value of a college education.

If we allow students to turn in assignments that do not meet our normal expectations, we are directly responsible for any future beliefs that college coursework is no longer the robust, challenging and enriching platform for citizen development that it once was. If we tell them that they only need an excuse in order to perform at a lower standard, challenge themselves less and miss deadlines, how can we expect them to be citizens of integrity? Where will they learn that adapting to change is the most necessary skill in the professional tool belt?

This responsibility is ours, and we must rise to the challenge. Higher education has endured epidemics, wars, recessions, depressions and a plethora of instances of social unrest. We must endeavor to not be the

Bio

Kristie Kiser is the student success coordinator for the University of North Georgia and a doctoral candidate in the university's higher education leadership and practice Ed.D. program.

Read more by [Kristie Kiser](#)

[jump to comments \(#comment-target\)](#)



[\(/print/advice/2020/04/16/teaching-online-should-not-mean-presenting-yourself-less-professionally-or\)](/print/advice/2020/04/16/teaching-online-should-not-mean-presenting-yourself-less-professionally-or)

Be the first to know.

[\(/https://www.insidehighered.com/content/sign-inside-higher-eds-newsletters\)](https://www.insidehighered.com/content/sign-inside-higher-eds-newsletters)

Get our **free** daily newsletter.

[\(/https://www.insidehighered.com/content/sign-inside-higher-eds-newsletters\)](https://www.insidehighered.com/content/sign-inside-higher-eds-newsletters)

Keep Me Informed ▶

I have read & agree to the terms of Inside Higher Ed's Privacy Policy.*

Inside Higher Ed Careers

Faculty Jobs (#tab-facultyjobs)	Administrative Jobs (#tab-administrativejobs)	Executive Administration Jobs (#tab-executiveadministrationjobs)	Jobs Outside Higher Education (#tab-jobsoutsidehighereducation)
---	---	--	---



[Education](https://careers.insidehighered.com/jobs/education/)

(<https://careers.insidehighered.com/jobs/education/>)

[Engineering & Mathematics](https://careers.insidehighered.com/jobs/engineering-and-mathematics/)

(<https://careers.insidehighered.com/jobs/engineering-and-mathematics/>)

[Health & Medical](https://careers.insidehighered.com/jobs/health-and-medical/)

(<https://careers.insidehighered.com/jobs/health-and-medical/>)

[Science & Technology](https://careers.insidehighered.com/jobs/science-and-technology/)

(<https://careers.insidehighered.com/jobs/science-and-technology/>)

[Social Sciences](https://careers.insidehighered.com/jobs/social-sciences/)

(<https://careers.insidehighered.com/jobs/social-sciences/>)

[Technical & Vocational Fields](https://careers.insidehighered.com/jobs/technical-and-vocational-fields/)

(<https://careers.insidehighered.com/jobs/technical-and-vocational-fields/>)

[WANT TO ADVERTISE? CLICK HERE \(HTTPS://WWW.INSIDEHIGHERED.COM/ADVERTISE\)](https://www.insidehighered.com/advertise)



Featured college pages



[\(/college/southern-nazarene-university\)](#)



[\(/college/northern-wyoming-community-college-district\)](#)



Bay State College

[\(/college/164641/bay-state-college\)](#)

POPULAR RIGHT NOW

[Practical advice for how colleges can responsibly reopen in the fall \(opinion\)](#)

[\(http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/04/16/practical-advice-how-colleges-can-responsibly-reopen-fall-opinion\)](http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/04/16/practical-advice-how-colleges-can-responsibly-reopen-fall-opinion)

[Teaching online should not mean presenting yourself less professionally or lowering academic standar](#)

[\(http://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/04/16/teaching-online-should-not-mean-presenting-yourself-less-professionally-or\)](http://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/04/16/teaching-online-should-not-mean-presenting-yourself-less-professionally-or)

[Live Updates: Latest News on Coronavirus and Higher Education](#)

[\(http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/17/live-updates-latest-news-coronavirus-and-higher-education\)](http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/17/live-updates-latest-news-coronavirus-and-higher-education)

[Preparing \(quietly\) for a fall semester without in-person instruction](#) (<http://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2020/04/01/preparing-quietly-fall-semester-without-person-instruction>)

[Signals that your college might not reopen in the fall \(opinion\)](#)

[\(http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/04/17/signals-your-college-might-not-reopen-fall-opinion\)](http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/04/17/signals-your-college-might-not-reopen-fall-opinion)

[How the shift to remote learning might affect students, instructors and colleges](#)

[\(http://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2020/03/25/how-shift-remote-learning-might-affect-students-instructors-and\)](http://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2020/03/25/how-shift-remote-learning-might-affect-students-instructors-and)

[How will pass/fail affect students' future?](#) (<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/13/how-will-passfail-affect-students-future>)

[College librarians prepare for looming budget cuts, and journal subscriptions could be in for a trim](#)

[\(http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/17/college-librarians-prepare-looming-budget-cuts-and](http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/17/college-librarians-prepare-looming-budget-cuts-and)



Hide comments











Opinions on Inside Higher Ed



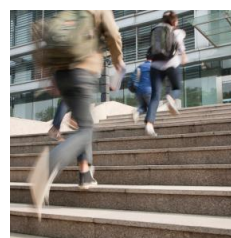
[\(/views/2020/04/17/three-questions-consider-more-colleges-worry-about-whether-theyll-financially\)](/views/2020/04/17/three-questions-consider-more-colleges-worry-about-whether-theyll-financially).

[Predicting and Communicating Bad Financial News](/views/2020/04/17/three-questions-consider-more-colleges-worry-about-whether-theyll-financially) (</views/2020/04/17/three-questions-consider-more-colleges-worry-about-whether-theyll-financially>).



[\(/views/2020/04/17/signals-your-college-might-not-reopen-fall-opinion\)](/views/2020/04/17/signals-your-college-might-not-reopen-fall-opinion).

[Coronavirus, Cash and Countdown](/views/2020/04/17/signals-your-college-might-not-reopen-fall-opinion) (</views/2020/04/17/signals-your-college-might-not-reopen-fall-opinion>).



[\(/views/2020/04/16/practical-advice-how-colleges-can-responsibly-reopen-fall-opinion\)](/views/2020/04/16/practical-advice-how-colleges-can-responsibly-reopen-fall-opinion).

[How to Responsibly Reopen Colleges in the Fall](/views/2020/04/16/practical-advice-how-colleges-can-responsibly-reopen-fall-opinion) (</views/2020/04/16/practical-advice-how-colleges-can-responsibly-reopen-fall-opinion>).

Inside Higher Ed's Blog U

[Confessions of a Community College Dean](/blogs/confessions-community-college-dean) (</blogs/confessions-community-college-dean>).



[covid-19](#)).

[GradHacker \(/blogs/gradhacker\)](/blogs/gradhacker).

[Renew Your Research \(/blogs/gradhacker/renew-your-research\)](/blogs/gradhacker/renew-your-research).

[Confessions of a Community College Dean \(/blogs/confessions-community-college-dean\)](/blogs/confessions-community-college-dean).

[Summer Jobs \(/blogs/confessions-community-college-dean/summer-jobs-0\)](/blogs/confessions-community-college-dean/summer-jobs-0).

[Learning Innovation \(/blogs/learning-innovation\)](/blogs/learning-innovation).

[Preparing for Future Disruption: Hybrid, Resilient Teaching for a New Instructional Age \(/blogs/learning-innovation/preparing-future-disruption-hybrid-resilient-teaching-new-instructional\)](/blogs/learning-innovation/preparing-future-disruption-hybrid-resilient-teaching-new-instructional).

[University of Venus \(/blogs/university-venus\)](/blogs/university-venus).

[Confessions of a Hugger \(/blogs/university-venus/confessions-hugger\)](/blogs/university-venus/confessions-hugger).

BACK TO TOP

News & Views

Admissions

Digital Learning

Fund-Raising

Diversity

Careers

Find a Job

College Pages

Career Advice

Job Alerts



Editorial Webcasts

Vendor Webcasts

Reports & Data

Special Reports

Surveys

Booklets

AAUP Compensation Data

[Quick Takes](#) | [Views](#) | [Blog U](#) | [Audio](#) | [Topics](#) | [Events & People](#) | [Sponsored Content](#)

keyword

News & Opinion



search

[Free Newsletters](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Hire Faculty & Staff](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Work For Us](#)
| [Testimonials](#) | [Rights and Permissions](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Share our content](#)

Copyright © 2020 • Inside Higher Ed • 1150 Connecticut Avenue NW Suite 400 • Washington, DC 20036 •

Ph: 1-202-659-9208 • Fax: 1-202-659-9381

Do Not Sell My Personal Information

