



EDUCATION | GETTING SCHOOLED. | APRIL 13 2015 12:29 PM

A Good Professor Is an Exhausted Professor

A North Carolina education bill would be a disaster for research and pedagogy.

By Rebecca Schuman



Manning Hall at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Photo by benuski/Flickr Creative Commons

In higher-ed parlance the herculean act of teaching eight courses per year is what's known as "a 4-4 load" or, alternatively, a "metric ass-ton" of classroom time. And yet a new bill currently under consideration in the North Carolina General Assembly would require every professor in the state's public university system to do just that. The results would be catastrophic for North Carolina's major research universities. The region known as the Research Triangle—Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill, so named because of the three "Research-1"-level universities that anchor it—would quickly lose two of its prongs—the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University—were this bill to pass. And it just might.



REBECCA SCHUMAN

Rebecca Schuman is an education columnist for Slate.

According to the official press release from its sponsor, Republican state Sen. Tom McInnis, Senate Bill 593—called "Improve Professor Quality/UNC System"—would "ensure that students attending UNC system schools actually have professors, rather than student assistants, teaching their classes." Another result would be more courses taught by fewer professors. But that shouldn't matter, according to Jay Schalin of North Carolina's Pope Center for Higher Education Policy, who recently explained to the *Daily Tar Heel* that "the university system is not a jobs program for academics." What the bill's supporters either fail to realize—or, more likely, realize with utter glee—is that this bill actually has nothing to do with "professor quality" and everything to do with destroying public education and research. Forcing everyone into a 4-4 minimum (so ideally an excruciating 5-5, I guess?) is a "solution" that could only be proposed by someone who either doesn't know how research works or hates it. It's like saying: *Hey, I'll fix this car by*

treating it like a microwave.

