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## Ross faces cuts in first year

By Daniel Wiser  
State & National Editor

When UNC-system President Thomas Ross said state legislators might propose a cut as high as 30 percent for the system, many administrators feared for the worst.

But Ross didn't panic. He continued meeting with legislators to lobby for lower state funding cuts to the system, emphasizing the expected impact of the cuts on academic instruction at universities.

Ross also directed chancellors across the system to begin preparations for a cut of 15 percent. The final version of the budget proposed by legislators called for a 14.6 percent cut of \$407 million in state funding for the system.

In his first year as president, Ross has aimed to distance himself from criticisms of his Democratic leanings by demonstrating pragmatic leadership.

And when it remained unclear whether Gov. Bev Perdue would veto the state budget proposed



**Thomas Ross** became the 17th president of the UNC system on Jan. 1. He graduated from UNC's School of Law in 1975.

by legislators, Ross again urged chancellors to meet the challenge of substantial cuts head on at the system's Board of Governors meeting earlier this month.

"We can moan and groan about it or, on the other hand, we can understand that we have a responsibility to the people of North Carolina," he said.

Now that the budget has become law after legislators overrode Perdue's veto, Ross will oversee the board's implementation of the cuts across the system.

Hannah Gage, chairwoman of the board, said in an email that Ross has been a reliable advocate for the system in efforts to reach out to the first Republican majority in the state legislature since 1898.

"He's done a wonderful job in navigating through choppy waters, building new relationships and telling the University story," she said. "Though no one is thrilled with our 13-14 percent cut, President Ross is determined to do everything within his power to protect the quality of a University education."

Former president of Davidson College, Ross graduated with honors from UNC's School of Law in 1975. He then served as a judge on the N.C. Superior Court for 17 years before his appointment as director of the N.C. Administrative Office of the Courts in 1999.

Ross took office as the 17th UNC-system president on Jan. 1. Gage said his outlook for the system is a familiar one.

"His vision is a continuation of the vision every UNC President has had: that the state will continue its historic support of the University," she said.

Contact the State & National Editor at [state@dailytarheel.com](mailto:state@dailytarheel.com).

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