University of Louisiana at Lafayette students, staff and faculty are looking to improve campus facilities with a new five-year plan.

Like the previous five-year plan, the 2015-2020 plan will be funded primarily by student fees. This year, the general fee, which was introduced in the summer along with tuition increases, will go to a broader range of projects.

"The new fee has sort of a broad base so that it can be used in different situations depending on what the greatest need is. It can change what the fee will be targeted to," said provost and vice president of academic affairs James Henderson, Ph.D.

The general fee, which is summarized in students’ statement of account under 'other fees', will be used towards the five-year plan. With a broader name, Henderson said the fee could be applied to any project, as compared to having specific fees for each project.

While the previous five-year plan focused on facilities such as the union, the quad and Bourgeois hall, the new plan will focus on the academic aspect of the university. The plan was formed after the committee evaluated the university’s mission statement and results of the previous plan, and determined what could grow from the last plan.

"The previous strategic plan focused a lot on some of the issues around student support (such as) student housing, the union, facilities (and) some of the things around the rec center and athletics," said Henderson.

"Now, (it's) time to turn more to the academic program and say 'let's focus on the academic program and what we need to move the academic program forward'. Now that we've got some of this basis set (by) the student support facilities," he continued.

In the draft are key performance initiatives, which are goals set by the draft’s steering committee. Some goals for the new plan are to supply more classrooms with technology and expand faculty so there is a higher ratio of faculty to students.

According to university president Joseph Savoie, Ph.D., the university is set to grow despite recent state budget cuts.

"Higher education funding in our state has moved from us being a state university to being state supported to being state assisted and now, we're state located," he said.

Fewer funds meant fewer upgrades except in the case of emergency. Henderson said this was the case for Fletcher Hall when it experienced floods and roof leakages.

"We've got all these other academic programs where it's not in that dire of a situation, but it really needs work, and so that's part of what we're looking at is using some student fees and seeing how we can leverage that money to take care of the academic programs if the state is not going to do it," he said.

Henderson also said part of the university’s success in raising funds has been a continuous increase in enrollment over the past few years.

"(UL Lafayette) has seen enrollment grow, which has been really important and has really helped us get sort of a stable financial situation," he said. "Seventy percent of funding comes from tuition and fees, and only 30 percent of it comes from the state. With 70 percent coming from students, tuition and fees, that means as your enrollment grows, your resources will grow."

"We're clearly becoming more and more dependent on ourselves," said Savoie.

With the latest draft of the plan released Aug. 1, copies of the draft and its appendices are available on ULink. Students and faculty can read the documents and leave comments on a separate form. The committee will also hold open forums later in the fall semester. Henderson said comments from the UL Lafayette community are pertinent to the new plan's success.

"(The committee) spent a lot of time talking to people about how well did it work, where did we succeed ... and now where do we need to go," he continued.

"We're giving them the opportunity to not just write something and send it in, but also to have some dialogue," said Henderson.