Martin Hall receives fresh paint, flooring in 1st renovation

Martin Hall, the university's main administrative building, is receiving a tune-up that includes new lights, ceiling and doors, marking the first renovation since its construction more than 50 years ago.

Bill Crist, director of facilities management for the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, said "it was just time" for the building to have a "facelift." The estimated cost of renovations is $300,000.

The price tag is substantially less than the projected almost $1.9 billion bill predicted in the university's master plan, a 20-year blueprint for campus improvement. Crist said the estimation was calculated nearly six years ago and holds little relevance.

"When we did the plan in 2011, we knew certain things needed to be done," he said. "Obviously we know more today than we did then, so I'm not going to tie myself to those numbers."

Crist said the renovations, which began at the beginning of June, will not include any structural work or remodeling individual offices. Renovations are happening mostly in the hallways and include painting, replacement flooring to "higher level flooring," installing LED lights and ceiling and door replacements.

He added the project was "not an expensive one," with the focus lying on cost effectiveness for both the university and students, who ultimately pay for the renovations.

"The whole idea is to get the money that the students pay us to operate this institution and do it in the most efficient way that we can," he said.

The renovations, Crist said, will give the building a more modern interior that matches the newer buildings around UL Lafayette.

"We're trying to bring it up to a level where it appears to be like the rest of the campus is starting to look," he said.

Thomas Wilmore, a psychology major who has been a student worker in Martin Hall for the past two years, said he hasn't encountered anyone who has had an issue with Martin Hall's appearance. He also said he didn't mind working in Martin Hall before the renovations, but is looking forward to the changes.

"If anything, the worst parts about the building are probably the floors and the bathrooms," said Wilmore. "I'm most looking forward to the new floors, but the new lights are a nice touch as well."

Patricia Cottonham, vice president of student affairs, whose office is on the second floor of Martin Hall, said she feels the renovations fall right in line with what the president said he will do for the university.

"With Martin Hall being a main administration building, it's nice to see it get some of those touches, too," she said.

Cottonham added she is excited to see the combination of all the renovations.

"But I'm a fan of lights and I like good lighting so I'm most looking forward to that," she said. "I think you can say it represents the future of this university. It is bright!"

Scott Hebert, the project manager, and Crist both admitted this has been a complex project involving lots of careful planning.

They say the complexity was because most renovations needed to be done, have a short time frame of when they need to be completed and can only be worked on when there is little-to-no activity in the building.

For example, Crist said with door replacements, they have to be done in one day because failure to do so leaves an unsecure office.

Hebert said replacement needing to be done when no one is in the building to walk on the work.

During the weekdays while there is activity in the building, Crist said some light trimming and painting is done, but workers are mainly restricted to nights and weekends for most jobs.

"It's like trying to fix the engine of a vehicle while it's still running," Crist said.

Crist said the significance Martin Hall holds in regards to UL Lafayette adds to these renovations' importance.

"It's the face of the university," he said. "Every student that has to go through enrollment has to go through that building. Every visitor pretty much goes through that building."