

PLATO BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Friday, May 16, 2014 - 9:30 a.m.

DCS Office, 21 North Park, Madison, WI

Present: Patricia Becker - Chair, Greg Bell, Sybil Better, Bob Blitzke, Lauren Blough, Lewis Bosworth, Mary Boyd, Mary DeWolf, Aleta Murray, Scott Kolar, Tim Otis, Frank Power, Don Reeder
DCS: Barry Orton, Louise Fowler (DCS Administrative Assistant)
Guests: Gail Gordon, Jim Klum

Attachments: PLATO Draft Budget By Cost Center For Year 2014-15 Compared to Projected Fiscal Year 2013-14 Results; PLATO Responsibilities and Procedures; PLATO Policies; Report of the PLATO Ad Hoc Social Opportunities Committee (SOC) May 14, 2014

I. CALL TO ORDER – Patricia Becker called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. and welcomed Gail Gordon, Jim Klum and Louise Fowler. Gail is a principle developer of the PLATO website and a candidate for an At-Large position on the PLATO Board and Jim Klum assists Bob Blitzke with Special Events bus trips. Louise recently replaced Wendy Kerr as the DCS Administrative Assistant.

II. MINUTES – Aleta Murray made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 18, 2014 Board Meeting and Don Reeder seconded it. The motion was passed unanimously.

III. TREASURER’S REPORT – Tim Otis

A. Tim Otis presented the draft of the PLATO Budget for 2014-15 (see attached) approved and proposed by the Financial Advisory group for consideration by the Board. In the coming year there will be a switch from cash to accrual accounting which tracks transactions in the same reporting period in which they occur. The figures on the budget worksheet represent a hybrid of the two methods as the 2013-14 year’s accounting reflects numbers derived from a cash basis. Expenditures will be assigned to more appropriate categories with the planned improvements to the tracking system for the coming year.

B. The 2013-14 year was expected to end with a \$4,000.00 to \$5,000.00 deficit based on implementation costs for the PLATO website and the expenses for the production of the *Agora*, Volume 3. However, there may be a balance of + \$3,000.00 due to a bus trip funds surplus. The projected 2014-15 Curriculum Committee Budget was increased by \$1,000.00 for equipment purchases. \$2,000.00 was designated for “Info Tech Management” to cover PLATO website administration and maintenance. \$45,000.00 was entered for anticipated Special Events bus trip revenues and expenditures to indicate that this is a self-sustaining endeavor. \$1,700.00 appears in expenses and revenues under Fund Development to show that PLATO covers costs incurred for promotion of the PLATO Fund during the fiscal year and then bills the Fund to recover

the amount spent. This is in accordance with the agreement to make the Fund self-sustaining. As PLATO moves more processes online it is hoped that printing costs will be reduced. Mary DeWolf pointed out that there would be significant savings if limited copies of the Membership Directory were printed. **MOTION:** Aleta Murray made a motion to accept the budget as presented by the Treasurer and Lewis Bosworth seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. PRESIDENT'S REPORT – Patricia Becker

- A. Patricia Becker asked that the consideration be given to making the Financial Advisory group a permanent committee. She passed around an Organizational Chart to serve as a model for a discussion at the June meeting.
- B. Louise Fowler, DCS Administrative Assistant, took over from Wendy Kerr on May 6th. Her regular schedule will be Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. but she will make adjustments to attend important events that may occur on Mondays or Fridays and she will attempt to handle emergency calls and emails as they arise. Louise's email address is lfowler@dcs.wisc.edu and her phone number is (608) 262-5823. Wendy is providing orientation and training.
- C. The May 21st Luncheon is the focus of Louise's work now. She reported that 198 people are registered as of May 16th compared with 153 who attended in 2013. Registration at the event will be handled by the Membership Committee and Louise. Mary Boyd noted that the Nakoma Country Club parking lot was paved this week so that means the 80 parking spots should be available in the lot. The overflow will be handled with valet parking. Mary Boyd will provide directions to be sent via PLATO email. Tim Otis will contact the scholarship awardees to find out if they plan to attend. The room for the Pre-Luncheon Open Forum seats 50. If the response is so great that all cannot fit in the room on May 21st, Tim will offer an additional meeting at a later date in another place to accommodate the overflow. Mary DeWolf will bring copies of the PLATO FAQs and the "About PLATO" sheets to the forum.

V. DCS REPORT – Barry Orton

- A. Barry Orton noted that the next phase in Louise's orientation will be to review the contents of the three file cabinets containing PLATO documents. Barry has discarded multiple copies of old *Persimmons*, for example. On Tuesday, June 3rd at 1:00 p.m. Patricia Becker, Tim Otis, Mary Boyd and Lauren Blough are scheduled to meet to weed the files. Mary DeWolf will join them. In reply to Gail Gordon's question, Tim said thought had been given to the possibility of scanning some historical documents and discarding the print copies.
- B. Barry reported that the request for a dedicated PLATO office has been placed in the queue "for consideration." It's a time consuming process because all of the work has to be done in-house.

VI. SPECIAL REPORTS – Policies Subcommittee, Website Task Force and Social Opportunities Task Force

A. POLICIES SUBCOMMITTEE - Mary Boyd, Sybil Better and Lauren Blough served on the Policies Subcommittee and the Committee Chairs participated in the composition of the documents. Mary Boyd noted that during the revision of the Bylaws, it was determined that the “Resolutions” appended to the main document contained some material that was more appropriate for a Policies and Procedures Manual. The project was undertaken to compile a handbook that would serve as an introduction for members who were interested in PLATO’s organization and as a guide for volunteers who join PLATO committees and serve in leadership roles.

1. The duties are listed in the “PLATO Committees – Responsibilities and Procedures.” See attached. A section was added for the tasks assigned to Committee Chairs. It is expected that the committees will develop procedures that will be added to this section.
2. The second document “PLATO Policies” starts with the general and moves to specific policies related to each committee. See attached.
3. A third sheet presented a new policy for “Directory Listing” proposed by the Communication Committee. This is not incorporated into the above policy document and the intention is to handle it separately. It will be included if it is adopted.

Mary Boyd drew attention to two sections highlighted in red in “PLATO Policies.” The first, listed under the “Membership” heading, relates to the options for reduced membership fees. The Policies Subcommittee proposed a revision of the original “...offer the person the option of joining for a fee of \$20 (\$10 for one semester)” to “...offer the person...a reduced fee (50% of the established membership fee).” The second section highlighted in red occurs under the heading “Use of Personal Information.” It was noted that the last sentence becomes redundant and could be eliminated if the new policy on “Directory Listing” is adopted. **MOTION:** Sybil Better made a motion to approve the “PLATO Committees – Responsibilities and Procedures” and “PLATO Policies” and Don Reeder seconded it. Tim Otis asked where this information would be published. Mary Boyd responded that one objective is to have it widely published and made available so that a consistent view of each committee’s charges is maintained and also to serve as a tool for guiding members in leadership roles. Posting on the website is one method of communication. Tim objected to the change in the reduced membership fee because it might put membership beyond the reach of someone who is poor. The aim of the proposal to substitute a percentage was to eliminate the need for revising the document in the event that the fee increased. **AMENDMENT:** Tim Otis made a motion to amend the “PLATO Policies” to reinstate the original wording: “...offer the person the option of joining for a fee of \$20 (\$10 for one semester)” and Mary DeWolf seconded it. This would maintain the \$20.00 amount regardless of any future increases. Mary Boyd noted that there is an option contained in the policy to allow a complete waiver of the charge and that this

should address the needs of the person who couldn't afford even the reduced amount. The vote on the Amendment was three in favor and 10 opposed. The Amendment failed. Patricia Becker called the question. The motion to approve the "PLATO Committees – Responsibilities and Procedures" and the "PLATO Policies" documents with the changes proposed by the subcommittee passed unanimously.

The "Directory Listing" policy proposed by the Communication Committee was discussed. Greg Bell introduced it by amending it to read: "PLATO members will be listed in a password protected member directory on PLATO's website. A member's name, ~~home address~~, email address and phone number will be ~~shown~~ included. The information will be visible to PLATO members only. If a member wishes to show only their name but not phone or email ~~or home address~~, they should contact the PLATO Administrative Assistant and make a specific request to limit the personal information published in the directory to name only." He explained that the *Wild Apricot* software does offer a membership directory feature and there is an option for printing. Mary Boyd asked why the home address was removed. Some committee members and Coordinators use the home address to send notices to those without email addresses. Tim Otis asked if this would replace the printed version. Don Reeder noted that in print form a membership listing is born outdated. If the directory is posted on the website copies could be made for those members who don't have online access. Access would be password protected but all members with passwords would be able to search with a specific name and within an alphabetical listing. A generic password is assigned initially, but when the member logs in for the first time, he/she is prompted to replace it with a unique password. It is possible to assign Coordinators a higher level of access to member contact information to allow them to communicate with course participants. Accommodation would have to be made for members who want only their names listed in the directory. Scott Kolar noted that the first question is should there be an online directory and, if both electronic and print versions are produced, then complementary policies should be developed. There is a difference in the underlying database which, in addition to contact details found in a directory, contains critical information pertaining to membership such as renewal dates. Tim Otis noted that whatever form or forms the directory takes, there should be full disclosure to the members so that they are aware of 1) the necessity of maintaining a database with personal information, and 2) the full extent to which these details will be used and distributed. Scott Kolar suggested that more time is required to consider the use of personal data and to develop a more comprehensive policy. **MOTION:** Mary Boyd made a motion to table the present discussion and to request that the Communication Committee come back to the Board with an amended proposal. Lewis Bosworth seconded it and the motion passed unanimously.

- B. WEBSITE TASK FORCE – Scott Kolar reported that the Task Force has made good progress and the *Wild Apricot* software is ready for implementation on June 2nd. He asked that the Board participate in testing the system before its release. Scott will send an email with the link and the password for gaining access. He asked that testers report on their use and notify him of any problems encountered. There was a good representation of both those who renew their membership online and of those who send

a printed form with a check. July 1, 2015 will appear as the renewal date for those who join or renew their membership starting in April 2014.

- C. SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE – Frank Power, Aleta Murray and Lewis Bosworth served on the Task Force. Frank distributed the “Report of the PLATO Ad Hoc Social Opportunities Committee (SOC) May 14, 2014.” See attached. The charge was to “...review and asses PLATO’s current provision of ‘Social Opportunities’ (PSO) for its members.” Frank met with PLATO Past Presidents and incorporated their recommendation not to plan community-wide social gatherings that were appropriate for a group with a small membership. Instead the focus should be on adding a social component to everything PLATO does. The Task Force recommends promoting “quality standards for social opportunities among PLATO’s affinity groups.” Affinity groups may develop within committees and courses. They enhance the experience of members who join to pursue lifelong learning as well as to meet interesting people in social settings. Barry Orton agreed that the social element is as important as learning and should be built in and be transparent to members. He cited the Arts Café as an example.

Frank suggested that a “quality standard” such as the Curriculum Committee’s “Participatory Rating Scale 1-4” be adopted. “SOC’s plan is to gradually apply similar quality standards to our current and future PSO and develop *participatory social standards*.” Lauren Blough noted that the participatory rating scale for PLATO courses is not a quality standard. It merely reflects the different methods of course delivery. Lecture based classes are not relegated to a lower level in terms of quality. Frank suggested that the President-Elect be tasked with reviewing the progress of the incorporation of social opportunities into committee work and courses to “achieve a greater realization of PLATO’s Vision.” The President-Elect would report periodically to the Board. **MOTION:** Mary Boyd made a motion to accept the report of the Social Opportunities Task Force and to commend them for their work. Tim Otis seconded it and the motion passed unanimously.

- D. AGORA – Pat Becker noted that Edna Canfield resigned from the Agora Editorial Board and that Lewis Bosworth might be willing to give some direction to production of Volume 4 scheduled for 2015. Lewis said he is willing to lay the groundwork by developing a proposal for publication. He is willing to shepherd the group but not to be Editor. **MOTION:** Greg Bell made a motion to appoint Lewis Bosworth as Board Liaison to the Agora Editorial Board to begin the process of publishing Volume 4. Tim Otis seconded it and the motion passed unanimously.

VII. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Fund Development – Tim Otis

1. Email will be sent to members starting in early June focusing on the scholarship winners and promoting the benefits of the awards. Three emails with testimonials will be sent over a 6-week period.

2. With the 501(c)(3) status contributors can donate directly to PLATO and get a tax deduction. It also allows PLATO to designate funds for specific purposes such as memorial tributes. Dedications could be published in the *Persimmon* as a way to promote the Fund. For now donations will be put in the endowment but there are additional options for the future.

B. Special Events – Bob Blitzke

1. Bob reported that bus trips to the Goodman Theatre are planned for *White Snake* on June 5th and *Brigadoon* on July 24th. The schedule for the Early Music Festival is out and that may provide an opportunity for participating in a local event.
2. Jim Klum is a member of Special Events and he is assisting Bob with the trips. They are planning lectures for the fall.

C. Curriculum – Lewis Bosworth

1. Lewis sent the May 2nd Curriculum Committee minutes via email to the Board on May 13th. There are ten courses to be offered this summer and, if all of the “regulars” return and all of the new proposals materialize, there will be 47 courses for the Fall 2014 Semester.

D. Membership – Mary DeWolf

1. Mary sent the May 13th Membership Committee minutes via email to the Board on May 13th. The Committee representatives at the Catholic Charities event were approached and asked to make a presentation at Attic Angel again. The Committee has decided to schedule their visits as close to the Previews as possible so that new members can register for courses at the start of a semester and not have to wait to take advantage of their membership. The Committee is also making a push to get more minority representation in PLATO to encourage diversity. They have received suggestions for several places to visit. Pat Becker noted that there have been moves by PLATO to engage minorities in the past and encouraged the Committee to continue the effort.

E. Communication – Greg Bell

1. Greg Bell reviewed the history of the Communication and Membership Committees that started out as a joint venture but separated to focus on different projects. He noted that the impressive PLATO website was launched after intense preparation by the Task Force lead by Scott Kolar. Gail Gordon joined the group and took the lead on investigating the *Wild Apricot* membership and financial software package. Scott Kolar has remained at the forefront of the website projects and he was assisted by Gail Gordon, Patricia Herrling, Mike DiIorio, John Koch and Catherine Masi. There are more features that can be implemented with the software and Greg stated that Committee needs a Chair who understands the project possibilities. He has asked Gail to take over as Chair in July 2014. He will leave Communication and

remain as a member of the Membership Committee. Gail is listed on the ballot as a candidate for an open At-Large position on the Board. Since she will serve on the Board as the Committee representative, this means that someone else will have to be found for the open At-Large position. Sybil Better encouraged the placement of a candidate in time for the May 21st election. Aleta Murray congratulated the Task Force on the development, installation and professional look of the website and on the communication effort that was and still is an important part of the project.

2. Greg has contacted people and asked them to write a history of PLATO. Five or six have agreed to participate and Pat Becker has accepted the position of General Editor for the project.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

No old business was presented.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was presented.

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

NOTE: Next meeting is Friday, June 20, 2014 9:30 a.m. at DCS - 21 N. Park, Room 7041.

Respectfully submitted,
Lauren Blough