

# PLATO PERSIMMON

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## President's Corner *by Tim Otis*

### PLATO: 25 Years and Counting

#### A Review of the Past Year and a Look Ahead to this Fall

This year PLATO celebrates 25 years of providing member-directed, participatory learning opportunities. It has been an active year, filled with many new initiatives. We are ending the year with more than 930 members. We offered 40 or more courses during the fall and winter sessions. We estimated that 75 percent of our members participated in at least one course each semester. The Special Events Committee sponsored a record number of lecture- and tour-related educational events, most of which were oversubscribed.

Additionally, one of the most significant changes in the history of PLATO came about this year. Last fall the PLATO board approved the establishment of a fund development effort. A working committee was formed that set up the mechanisms for guiding and implementing this effort with the purpose of raising funds to support returning adult students at UW who are committed to pursuing higher education, and who have significant financial needs. It is our hope that this will provide a means to expand our overall mission to support ongoing education for those who want it.

Administratively, there have been a number of accomplishments that help keep our organization moving forward. More than 50 members are actively involved in PLATO committees. Their work helps to support our course coordinators, implement the special events that have become so popular, provide us with communication

(*Persimmon*, website), recruit and support new members, edit our literary journal, develop leadership opportunities for PLATO members, and numerous other tasks. As the year ends there also have been a number of changes in leadership in our committees. Greg Bell is the new chair of the Communication and Membership Committee, and along with Scott Kolar (website) and Patricia Herrling (*Persimmon*), is providing leadership for many new initiatives being planned. Lauren Blough and Harold Green are the new co-chairs of the Curriculum Committee as that committee continues its vital role. Mary Boyd continues her excellent work as chair of the Special Events Committee, and she now has a co-chair: Linda Bunger.

During this past year the Board of Directors revised our bylaws. Two significant changes included expanding our mission statement to include our charitable efforts, and incorporating the management of UW/PLATO relationships into ongoing board responsibilities rather than having a separate standing committee. Last fall the board also authorized PLATO to pursue 501 (c) (3) status and in February an application was filed with the IRS. We are currently waiting to see if it is approved. If we achieve this status, we will have broader access to support fundraising efforts—including soliciting grants—to further our mission. Our relationship with UW-Madison Continuing Studies continues to be

excellent, and we are in sound financial shape as an organization.

We are looking forward to a number of events this fall. Among them are:

- Fall courses beginning in September, including a number of new offerings,
- A host of new and interesting special events,
- Our 25th Anniversary Celebration in October,
- Our committees developing new strategies to support PLATO, and
- The publication of the second volume of the *Agora*.

This past year has been one filled with energy and growth. As we anticipate the new year, expect to see PLATO continuing to move forward, building on the ideas and commitment of our members. Hopefully, each of you will find a way to become involved and contribute to our future.

## Membership Renewal Notice

It's time to renew your annual PLATO membership for 2012-2013. Dues remain at \$50 (a value we can truly appreciate and enjoy). Choose your renewal method:

**By Mail:** Complete the membership form included in this newsletter, with your name, current mailing address, phone number, and email address, so that our records remain up to date and accurate. Make your check payable to UW-Madison and mail the completed form and your check to UW-Madison PLATO, 21 N. Park St., 7th Fl., Madison, WI 53715.

**Online:** Access PLATO's online membership form at: [www.seniorlearning.wisc.edu/plato/membership.htm](http://www.seniorlearning.wisc.edu/plato/membership.htm). Click on "Join or Renew Online!" and complete the form. Only credit cards can be used with online registration.

With support from Continuing Studies at UW-Madison

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## Two Adult Students Win Scholarships Funded by PLATO

Rebecca Holzmann and Edward Sanyang got some much needed financial help in the form of scholarships funded by PLATO at the reception for UW-Madison Continuing Studies Outstanding Adult Student Scholarship winners on April 24. More than 100 returning adult student had applied for 32 scholarships.

Both Rebecca and Edward are attending UW-Madison full time while also single-parenting young children and working part time. Rebecca plans to graduate with a degree in business in 2012, and Edward expects to receive a degree in electrical engineering in 2013. Both will graduate with substantial student debt.

Rebecca and Edward are the latest in a series of returning adult students to win



Left to right: Fred Ross, Tim Otis, Frank Power, Rebecca Holzmann, Marv Beatty, Sydell Power.

Single Parent Scholarships funded by PLATO, with our support for these awards beginning in 2003. This year, PLATO is launching a campaign to both solidify and expand our support for this important endeavor. The Board of Directors has recently established

## Donate to the PLATO Fund Online

If you have been to the PLATO website, recently you'll have noticed a change. A donation page has been added in support of the PLATO Fund. You can find it at [www.seniorlearning.wisc.edu/plato/donate.htm](http://www.seniorlearning.wisc.edu/plato/donate.htm) or by clicking on the "Donate" link on the left hand navigation frame. There you can find out about the PLATO scholarships and how you can contribute. If you want to mail your contribution you will find the mailing address for the UW Foundation. Better yet, contribute online. Clicking on the online contribution link sends you directly to the UW Foundation website donation page for the PLATO Fund. Enter the amount you would like to contribute and your credit card information and you are done. It's fast, easy, safe, and secure. You will receive email and written confirmations of your contribution from the UW Foundation.

## PLATO Fund Ready To Accept Donations

Following almost a year of effort in laying the groundwork, the creation of the PLATO Fund has been accomplished. PLATO members and others can now make tax-deductible donations to the fund.

As you will read elsewhere in this *Persimmon*, the immediate goal for the fund is to expand PLATO's charitable giving, which currently consists of two scholarships each year for post-secondary adult students at UW-Madison with significant financial need. As the fund grows in the future its reach may broaden to such other charitable purposes as the Board of Directors may determine, but it will always focus on education.

Use of money in the fund is entirely controlled by PLATO's Board of Directors, although the money itself is invested and managed by the UW Foundation. The relationships between PLATO, the Foundation, and UW-Madison Continuing Studies are spelled out in formal, signed agreements.

It is our goal that donations to the fund will be sufficient for PLATO to award five

the PLATO Fund, a dedicated endowment administered by the UW Foundation. Earnings from the endowment, which is funded by donations from PLATO members and others, will support PLATO's scholarship activity. The Board of Directors has set a goal of increasing the PLATO Fund so that by 2015 we can fund five scholarships awarded by the UW Division of Continuing Studies, similar to those awarded to Rebecca and Edward.

You recently received a mailing that gave information on this fund, including details about how to make a gift. Your financial support is vital to reaching our goal. Why should you donate? The recipients are young parents who are highly motivated and working hard to obtain a degree from UW-Madison. They really need the money the scholarships provide. And your donation is tax deductible! It's a win-win all around.

scholarships annually by 2015. Even this number will be small, since the need is enormous. In 2012 there were 115 qualified applicants to Continuing Studies for the 32 scholarships ultimately awarded.

As the informational literature included here so well expresses, the idea giving rise to creation of the fund is quite simple: education has helped us in our lives; making a donation to the fund, whether large or small, provides each of us the opportunity to help the lives of others. We can make a college degree possible for individuals who otherwise might be denied this gift.

PLATO's filing for 501(c)(3) status as a tax-exempt organization is currently being reviewed by the Federal Internal Revenue Service. Until such time as this filing is approved, donations to the fund, whether by check or credit card, must be made to the UW Foundation independent of your membership fee. When and if 501(c)(3) status is approved it will be possible to include a donation to the fund in one single payment to PLATO when you renew your annual membership.

## Growing our PLATO Membership

It's exciting, involving, participating, discussing, learning, lecturing, viewing, writing, and traveling, and you were there! From global affairs to current events, from Whither the State to Better Energies, PLATO members were there. Special events tours and lectures have seen great turn-outs and the *Agora* writing/photography team is readying a second volume after the success of Volume I. Our Curriculum Committee provided members with more than 40 course offerings this past year and we anticipate a steady growth in new courses. "Baby Boomers" are now starting to retire, having reached 66 years, and we anticipate many will be joining PLATO. New course offerings are coming to our attention each semester and with your enthusiasm for them we expect to have some ready for Fall 2012. Check your weekly PLATO email for these announcements.

Word of mouth has been PLATO's chief recruiting tool. That means new members are coming to PLATO through you, our current members. Please continue this enthusiasm for PLATO. It helps to keep our annual fee very, very reasonable for people in all walks of life. In 2012 we will be doing a little more promotion of PLATO and you may hear about PLATO or read about PLATO in the media. Members tell us people don't know about PLATO

## PLATO Annual Spring Luncheon

A good crowd, 176 members, attended the Annual Spring Luncheon at the Sheraton on Thursday, May 17. PLATO President Tim Otis awarded recognition plaques to two long-term members who have generously given of their time and expertise coordinating PLATO courses: Jim Christensen and Fred Blancke. Many of you have participated in Jim's philosophy courses and in Fred's travel journeys and Search for Meaning classes, and undoubtedly have enjoyed them.

Fred Ross explained the goals of the newly initiated UW Foundation PLATO Endowment Fund, an opportunity to increase our scholarship contributions

because they don't hear about it. With our 25th Anniversary Celebration coming this October, we do plan some publicity and we hope to attract some new members, but you are our best recruiters and you are doing a great job of encouraging new members to join PLATO.

We have PLATO members who will speak to organizations about PLATO. If you belong to another organization that invites speakers for talks about retiree learning opportunities, please contact any course coordinator and he or she will put you in contact with a PLATO board member for a speaker.

PLATO Course Coordinators are the essence of PLATO and our chief learning guides. Most have approached PLATO with their course idea and a proposal for their course. This is how PLATO has grown to 40-plus courses. If you have the knowledge and skill or know someone who would be a good course coordinator, please bring your idea to the Curriculum Committee. New courses are another great way to expand our PLATO membership. So go forth and encourage your friends and neighbors to join PLATO. After you finish reading this issue of the *Persimmon*, be sure to renew your own membership for fall 2012. Go to: [www.seniorlearning.wisc.edu/plato](http://www.seniorlearning.wisc.edu/plato).

to the lifelong learning efforts of financially disadvantaged returning adult students.

The PLATO officers and two board directors were officially elected, while guest speaker Nino Amato, President of the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, challenged us to become actively involved in shaping the trajectory of governmental policies affecting our demographic, including those that relate to health care.

We sincerely thank Mary Boyd, chair, and all the Special Events Committee members for organizing this celebration of another successful PLATO year.

## Beyond the Page: Connecting Lifelong Learners

What do PLATO and Dane County Public Libraries have in common? A commitment to lifelong learning. Dane County Library Service (DCLS), in partnership with the Madison Community Foundation (MCF), have embarked on an innovative initiative to forever promote lifelong learning. Beyond the Page is a permanent endowment that will support humanities programming in all 28 Dane County libraries—ensuring lifelong learning opportunities in perpetuity.

As a national model, Beyond the Page will provide a pool of programming resources for librarians to imagine, collaborate, plan, and promote new, engaging projects for citizens. Annual payments from the Beyond the Page Fund will dramatically increase the number of participatory events, thought-provoking exhibitions, stimulating lecture series, interactive presentations, and other lifelong learning opportunities—for all ages. These programs will not only encourage learning, but also participation, in turn creating a more involved and informed citizenry across Dane County.

Why humanities programming? Because the humanities give us a breadth and depth of understanding our human condition through art, history, language, literature, philosophy, drama, religious studies, culture, and more.

The Beyond the Page initiative received early encouragement with a remarkable \$350,000 challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). DCLS, MCF and the 28 Dane County libraries are currently raising the necessary matching funds. To date, more than \$800,000 has been secured towards the \$1.4 million goal.

If you would like to support or participate in Beyond the Page activities, you can get more information at: [www.beyondthepage.info](http://www.beyondthepage.info). Local libraries also have Beyond the Page displays.

## Curriculum Committee Report *by Lauren Blough and Harold Green*

Judy King, who so ably chaired the Curriculum Committee, passed the reins on to co-chairs Harold Green and Lauren Blough at the May meeting.

In other news, Frank Power, who displayed his talents as a skilled Master of Ceremonies in February will also MC the Fall and Spring Previews, and long-term members Arlene Ellingson, Catherine Bloomer, and Lois Karn resigned recently after years of service to curriculum development. If you'd like to work with coordinators and facilities to bring PLATO members a stimulating program of courses each semester, join the Curriculum Committee. Contact Harold Green at [harlgren@aol.com](mailto:harlgren@aol.com) or 608-831-6126 or Lauren Blough at [laurenblough@att.net](mailto:laurenblough@att.net) or 608-249-0258.

Coordinators provided Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 attendance rosters to give us an idea of how well PLATO is serving its community with educational opportunities. The data only provides a snapshot of the total activity, but the results are rewarding.

In the fall we were able to collect the information from 73 percent, or 29 of the 40 classes. Based on the records we received, 785 people (representing 545 individuals) attended those 29 classes. 107 attended two classes, 38 attended three, 16 attended four, one attended five, and one person attended six classes. We had more data to work with for the spring semester, having received rosters for 33 of the 38 courses, or 87 percent. 984 people were recorded on those attendance lists, 663 of whom were individuals. 161 attended two classes, 39 attended three, 21 attended four, three attended five and one person attended eight classes. Courses range in size from fewer than 10 to more than 110 participants. Topics covered were as diverse as Bugs, Beetles, and Bipedes; Novels Old and New; Life Maps; Global Affairs; and Art Museums.

Summer courses include Short Stories and Essays, Continuing Philosophy and the International Films series. Watch for

the announcement of the fall schedule, when you'll have the opportunity to attend three new classes: Finding Happiness, The Sacred Feminine, and A Critical History of the Catholic Church. You'll find the curriculum with times and locations at the PLATO website at [www.seniorlearning.wisc.edu/plato/courses.htm](http://www.seniorlearning.wisc.edu/plato/courses.htm) in the fall.

The course coordinators are the main reason for PLATO's success as a continuing education organization. To express our gratitude for sharing their expertise, the Curriculum Committee is busy with plans for a fall luncheon in their honor. By all accounts, the revamped spring preview at the Madison Senior Center was a hit. Frank Power kept things moving so that there was time to consult with coordinators upstairs after the presentations. But, there's always room for improvement and the committee will incorporate received suggestions in planning the Sept 19 fall preview.

## THANK YOU!

Another successful semester of PLATO courses and special events is ending, and there are more special events and short courses planned between now and the beginning of the PLATO fall semester. On behalf of the PLATO Board of Directors and the membership, the Leadership Committee would like to thank the many PLATO members who serve on the standing committees that make these courses and special events happen. Committees are chaired by members of the PLATO Board\*, many of whom also serve on other committees, but it is to those of you who participate with them in the running of this membership-led and participatory organization that we extend a very hearty thanks.

### Curriculum

*Chair, Judy King\**

*Co-Chair, Harold Green\**

Helen Aarli	Jim Halloran
Frank Power*	Lois Karn
Sybil Better	Peggy McEvilly
Lauren Blough*	Sydell Power
Colleen Cleary	Mona Wasow

### Special Events

*Chair, Mary Boyd\**

Bob Blitzke	Jill Hiestand
Lauren Blough*	Cynthia Hiteman
Judith Bogue	Fay Linehan
Linda Bunger	Myrna McNatt
Dilorio Carla	Aleta Murray
Marie Eichinger	Jannette Poe
Laura Ganski	Diane Salzer
Bob Gersbach	JoAnn Savoy
Susann Griffiths	Norma Standing

### Communication and Membership

*Interim Chair, Tim Otis\**

Shelly Abramson	Sharon Hirschfeld
Patricia Becker*	Madhu Joshi
Greg Bell*	Scott Kolar*
Lauren Blough*	Nancy Stroud
Ruth Diehl	Pauline Witte
Patricia Herrling	

### University Relations

*Chair, Marv Beatty\**

Marv Beatty\*

### The Agora

*Managing Editor, Vaunceil Kruse*

Lauren Blough*	Phil Paulson
Edna Canfield	Fred Ross

### Leadership Committee

*Chair, Patricia Becker\**

Greg Bell*	Tim Otis*
Ruth Diehl	Fred Ross
Ann Falconer	Judy Sadowsky*