

PLATO BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Friday, February 21, 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, Frank Power, Don Reeder

Attachments: PLATO Board Administrative Support Staff, PLATO Staff Position Tasks by Committee 2/14

- I. CALL TO ORDER** – Patricia Becker called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.
- II. MINUTES** – Lauren Blough noted that the “next meeting date” at the end of the January minutes should read February 21, 2014 not 2013. Aleta Murray made a motion to approve the corrected minutes of the January 17, 2014 Board Meeting and Mary DeWolf seconded it. The motion was passed unanimously as did the approval of the December 13, 2013 Board Retreat Minutes.
- III. TREASURER’S REPORT** – No report.
- IV. PRESIDENT’S REPORT** – Patricia Becker
  - A. Patricia Becker asked Board members to be thinking of representing PLATO at the WALL conference to be hosted by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UW Milwaukee, September 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>.
  - B. It was announced that Wendy has reduced her DCS hours to 80%. She may be contacted for PLATO business during the following hours: Mondays 12:30 – 4:30 p.m., Wednesdays 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., and Fridays 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
  - C. The issue of advertising other organizations’ events came up when the Arboretum requested that PLATO include the Arboretum in our announcements. Bob Blitzke noted that the Arboretum would not advertise PLATO bus trips when asked to do so. The UW Retirement Association indicated that their Bylaws prevent them from publicizing events of other organizations. Patricia Becker will respond to the Arboretum and tell them that our policy is pending while the issue is discussed further. Another possibility is that PLATO could include online links for local activities, thus eliminating the responsibility for corrections, updates and other detail maintenance.
- V. SPRING PREVIEW REPORT** - Frank Power
  - A. The event on Wednesday, February 19th was Frank’s 5<sup>th</sup> Preview. It went very well and, including the Coordinators, there were 175 to 180 in attendance. Jeff at the Madison Senior Center is a huge help as he gets the room in order quickly, setting up the chairs and tables and marshalling clean up at the end of the session. Frank was

disappointed that he only received 35 evaluations when the usual response is in the 85 to 90 range. One respondent asked that the timer be shut off as it was distracting. One problem that occurs every time is that some Coordinators are absent. There were at least eight missing this time and only two got substitutes to deliver the pitches for their courses. There were two things that Frank thought especially notable about this spring's event. (1) There were lots of new people and this may have been their first encounter with PLATO so it was important to impress them. Mary DeWolf thought there were many younger people in the crowd. (2) Future Previews will be changed by the new PLATO website so the procedures should be re-assessed by Frank's successor. Some attendees said they access PLATO information via the web. Frank will provide a written report when he's had a chance to review the evaluations and take a breath.

- B. Bob Blitzke said that the Special Events table had a lot of traffic where flyers were distributed. Bob reported that \$250.00 was spent on refreshments. The leftover beverages can be used at the February 26<sup>th</sup> Arts Café launch. Marty Jenich took lots of photos. He doesn't charge for the service but would like to be credited when pictures are posted. Nina Sparks had a PowerPoint introduction to PLATO but no one came to the room. A website demonstration was set up in the Madison Senior Center computer room and it eventually filled up with Coordinators and attendees asking questions. Mary DeWolf pointed out that Norma Standing and Nina Sparks sat at the Membership table throughout the session and signed up a new Committee volunteer and twelve new PLATO members. Several others said they would register online. At the Curriculum Committee table Lewis talked to two potential Coordinators – Jane Bannerman (UW College Library) who may offer a course on computing for seniors and Les Beecher who is drafting a proposal for a class on *Moby Dick*. Helen Aarli talked to a woman who could be her successor as Coordinator for the “Art at the Library” sessions that will start in the fall of 2014. This person would attend the fall sessions and then take over from Helen for subsequent classes. There was a feeling that the opportunity to meet face-to-face is a beneficial feature of the Previews. About 20-25 met across the street after the Preview and quickly emptied a celebratory bottle of wine provided by Bob.

## VI. ANNUAL LUNCHEON – Patricia Becker

- A. Patricia Becker reported that the suggestions for speakers at the luncheon did not work out as the people contacted were not available on May 21<sup>st</sup> or they could not tailor their presentation to less than an hour. Don Reeder said Ellsworth Brown, Director of the Wisconsin Historical Society, would make an ideal speaker. He's an accomplished historian, humorous and in control of the best historical society in the U.S. that is open for use to all. He could talk about how things are changing re funding and how that affects this important adjunct to education in the state. Mary Boyd added that PLATO members expressed an interest in Wisconsin history and local history when polled in a survey a few years ago. Aleta Murray suggested UW Police Chief Susan Riseling who could talk about the Walker protests and being a police chief. Three Board members have heard her speak and they said she was delightful and humorous. Chief Riseling could bring a PowerPoint but it was decided a projection screen wouldn't work well with the room setup. Greg Bell said Ellsworth Brown represents a facility that is or

could be a resource for PLATO classes. A vote was taken and six favored Chief Riseling; five favored Ellsworth Brown. Patricia Becker will contact Chief Riseling to confirm the arrangement and provide the details of the event.

- B. The PLATO President puts the program together. Wendy has past year's copies. It was decided that Fred Ross and Marv Beatty will be the two honorees this year for their exemplary commitment to the growth and enhancement of PLATO. We also want to show appreciation for Wendy Kerr's many years of service to PLATO.
- C. The invitation should go out about six weeks before May 21<sup>st</sup>, around the first or second week of April. There has to be enough time to get the number of meals in to the restaurant. It was decided that a formal printed invitation is the best way to promote the importance of the event as a tribute to Wendy, Fred and Marv. Online registration will be available. Sybil Better and the Communication and the Membership Committees will help with that.

## **VII. DCS FOLLOW-UP – Patricia Becker**

DCS is going to hire a part time (half-time, 100% PLATO) employee in the two-year Special Project category to replace Wendy as the PLATO Administrative Support Staff. (See attached position description and tasks list.) The category allows flexibility. It is hoped that this person will be on the job by April. He/she will have a cubicle at the northwest end of the building, which is the section where the current PLATO cubicle is located. DCS will seek bids for construction of two small offices in that area, one of which would be for PLATO and PLATO would be expected to contribute to the cost. Wendy will train the new person. She is reducing her hours to 80%. The schedule for the new hire has not been determined yet. There were some concerns that the \$22,000.00 (+ benefits) pay rate is not enough for this skill level and grade. If the position is regularized after two years we would need more information on the fit with classified levels. It was noted that Barry Orton was extraordinarily helpful in getting the discussion and action to this point.

## **VIII. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES**

### **A. Curriculum and Facilities – Lewis Bosworth**

Turner Hall (near Stoughton Road and the Beltline) is being considered as a location for the fall 2014 schedule. Frank Power reported on (1) his plans for the Preview, and (2) his meeting with Kaj Foget and Paul Hartwig concerning the promotion of social opportunities for PLATO members. The launch of the Arts Café was discussed. A new course on Religion, Philosophy and Science was approved by the Committee for a six-week summer 2014 course. The committee is looking for ways to encourage Coordinators to participate in website training so that they can update their course pages. A copyright source document will be developed as a guide for Coordinators. There are 36 courses offered for the spring 2014 semester.

### **B. Communication – Greg Bell**

1. Greg Bell said that website promotion at the Preview was successful. There were inquiries from two Coordinators. Five people have put a lot of time and effort into getting the site to its present level of accomplishment: Gail Gordon, Patricia Herrling, Scott Kolar, Mike DiIorio and John Koch. Moving forward consideration will be given to whether or not we will add new software that could handle financial transactions (of online registration, for instance). PLATO will have to make the decision in time to add it in 2015. Greg said it would be of benefit to the part time DCS staff person assigned to PLATO. There was also discussion about substituting an online blog for the current twice-a-year printed *Persimmon* for a more timely publication. However, it might be hard to find someone willing to do postings once every two weeks. A pdf document could be offered for printing for those who don't have a PC or email.
2. Communication has developed some promotional material and is waiting for the 501 (c)(3) certificate to arrive as it provides proof of tax-exempt status. The order for a notepad that serves as a 4-in-1 flyer/handout/mini brochure, designed by DCS, is ready to be printed at Alpha Graphics when the certificate is received.
3. Greg sent the results of Survey question # 10 to Lauren Blough and she forwarded it to the Curriculum Committee. Greg will send the details for accessing the survey results to the Board. Communication is considering doing another survey in August. It might be shorter. Mary Boyd suggested that it might be too soon to do another and said the queries should be consistent so that the same data could be compared over time.

C. Membership – Mary DeWolf

1. The Membership Committee met on February 10<sup>th</sup> to assign tasks for the Preview. They gave a presentation at Lake Edge Lutheran Church and 3 new members registered. On February 13<sup>th</sup> they went to Good Shepherd Lutheran where all of the membership forms were distributed. Mary recognized some of the Good Shepherd people at the Preview. Mary has asked the Committee members to contact her with questions instead of going to Wendy.
2. Many of the printed PLATO forms are out of date and Mary suggested that we add two things to the membership form: (1) a check off for “New Member” or “Renewal” and (2) “How did you hear about PLATO?” The New/Renewal used to be on the forms. Bob Blitzke asked if Membership had access to the PLATO member database. Mary said no. He also noted that Committee member, Catherine Masi, developed a web form for Special Events.

D. Special Events – Bob Blitzke

1. Bob Blitzke reported on upcoming events. “An Iliad” has 40 people signed up so they will try the split bus experiment. “Art in Bloom” has 14 registrations and the April 2<sup>nd</sup> luncheon at MATC is filled. Bob sent a mass email announcing the MATC luncheon and all of the spaces were taken before Wendy sent a notice. A tour of Epic Systems in Verona is scheduled for April 12<sup>th</sup>. The limit is 50 and this trip is expected to sell out quickly, too. On April 30<sup>th</sup> there is a bus trip for the last of the Milwaukee Rep series, “History of Invulnerability” (web form developed by Catherine Masi).
2. Bob brought up two issues that have come up with bus trips: (1) Someone complained recently about wine being consumed on a bus. It was felt that this shouldn’t be a problem if it’s ok with the driver, if glass bottles aren’t used, and if there’s no disturbance created. Bob will devise a Bus Trip Etiquette Guide. (2) It seems that the same nonmembers attend bus trips over and over again. Should Special Events raise the surcharge from \$5.00 to \$10.00? Mary Boyd suggested limiting registration to members for a period of time to give them the opportunity to sign up before seats are filled by nonmembers but that adds administrative overhead. Bob will take the idea of increasing the surcharge back to the Special Events Committee.
3. Special Events has so many members it’s hard to set a schedule so they may vary meeting days and times to accommodate the greatest number of members.

E. Fund Development – No report.

#### **IX. AD HOC COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES – Lewis Bosworth**

Lewis Bosworth reported on the Arts Café planning. It will be launched on February 26<sup>th</sup> at the Madison Senior Center with music, poetry, exhibits, and time for socializing. The arts included in future sessions will be selected based on the feedback gathered from forms distributed at the first event. There are six or seven hosts who will circulate among the guests. Aleta, Scott and Greg were instrumental in publicizing the Arts Café on the website and in mailing invitations to those members without email. Don Reeder mentioned that the opportunity for integrating fund raising for the PLATO Fund with these events should not be missed. Maybe once a year a silent auction could be included in an Arts Café gathering. Frank Power noted that this is an experimental process and that it is developing well.

#### **X. NEW BUSINESS**

No new business was presented.

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Lauren Blough