

DRAFT PLATO BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Friday, June 15, 2012 - 9:30 a.m.

DCS Office, 21 North Park, Madison, WI

Present: Tim Otis, Chair, Marv Beatty, Patricia Becker, Greg Bell, Lauren Blough, Mary Boyd, Harold Green, Scott Kolar, Mike Lovejoy, Frank Power, Judy Sadowsky, Arden Trine, Wendy Kerr, Barry Orton. Guest: Bob Blitzke

- I. CALL TO ORDER** – T. Otis called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.
- II. MINUTES** – The minutes of the May 18, 2012 meeting were approved.
- III. TREASURER’S REPORT** – Mike Lovejoy
 - A. Mike Lovejoy provided three spreadsheets as a basis for the budget discussion: 1) Year-to-Date Statement; 2) PLATO Asset History; and, 3) 2012-13 Tentative Budget, a template for preparing next year’s budget. The year-to-date statement, with monthly tracking of revenue and expenditure in the Income and Outgo columns, is incomplete as the last quarter’s figures will be supplied by DCS next month in July. PLATO funds are at their lowest mark during this period each year. We are slightly overspent with expenditures running \$126,919.04 against income of \$124,636.88 in part due to more activities and a double payment for scholarships (2011 and 2012). *Agora* costs still need to be entered when Wendy supplies the amounts.
 - B. The Committees should review the entries on the 2012-13 Tentative Budget and determine if the amounts should be adjusted. Note that some entries are estimates that will be revised when the last quarter’s expenditures are updated. Committee Chairs should email their comments to Mike Lovejoy in July so that he can prepare the 2012-13 Budget for the August Board meeting.
 - C. Mary Boyd asked if the Special Events Committee will receive a balance sheet for the past year to see if the details indicate the activities were balanced, overspent or possibly made money. Wendy will send it to Mary. A separate section will be added to the budget to track Communications and Management and miscellaneous member expenses related to PLATO promotional materials and activities.
 - D. Frank Power asked if an audit is done and if funds should be budgeted for that. No audit has been done to date though the requirements may change with 501 (c) (3) status. Mike Lovejoy inquired and reported in a June 25th email message that Jan, PLATO’s CPA said: “...that an audit is required by the State Dep’t of Regulation and Licensing if we receive more than \$400,000.00 in donations total and/or more than \$200,000.00 in donations in any year.” Jan also replied that there are no requirements for having an audit done when a new Treasurer takes office, but PLATO can order an audit at any time.

- E. In response to a question asked by Mary Boyd, it was noted that Committees should keep track of and report honorariums (e. g. for Special Events lectures) and donations paid to charitable organizations and locations that host PLATO courses.

IV. PRESIDENT’S REPORT – Tim Otis

- A. Tim Otis reported that thank you letters from the scholarship recipients were received as well as a letter from Judith Strand thanking PLATO for our participation in the awards. Scott Kolar suggested that the letters be posted on the PLATO website. While it might be appropriate to display some of the substance, it was noted that we should not include details such as addresses.

V. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Curriculum and Facilities – Harold Green

1. Harold Green reported that the committee is gathering a list of host locations to serve as a resource base. Wendy emailed a master list that DCS keeps on file. The list maintenance will be an ongoing effort and will provide site information for PLATO’s changing needs.
2. The Fall 2012 course blurbs are due on July 1st for publication and distribution with the August *Persimmon*. The committee has received about a half of them to date. 40 classes are scheduled for this fall and three of them are new offerings. Additional proposals for new classes are pending for upcoming semesters. The Coordinators Luncheon is scheduled for September 12th at Babe’s.
3. The Curriculum Committee needs more members to replace recent losses caused by family illness and fatigue. Committee meetings are now being held at DCS to make it easier for Wendy to attend as her input is essential to planning.
4. Greg Bell sent an email to Harold and Lauren indicating that he assigned Stephanie Sorensen, a CAM member, as a liaison to the Curriculum Committee. PLATO meetings are open to all and the Curriculum Committee would welcome additional working members as noted above. Greg also mentioned an effort to make sure class attendees are PLATO members but Harold pointed out that that is not a primary objective of the Curriculum Committee. During further discussion it appeared that Greg thought that class coordinators attended the committee meetings. This is not the case so it was noted that Stephanie will not meet coordinators nor hear discussions of their classes there.
5. Harold reported that Coordinator Bruce Gregg is investigating other sites for his Thursday class. Upper Iowa charged PLATO \$300.00 as opposed to the \$100.00 typically paid to other hosts. During this discussion other Board

members mentioned their experiences with the Upper Iowa director, Alan Capelle. Harold asked if he and/or Lauren could sign the contracts with the host locations. The reply was that generally the sites do not require contracts, but for the ones such as Mt. Olive Lutheran Church that does, the Curriculum Committee Chair(s) are authorized to sign. Mike Lovejoy said he does not need a copy but it would be a good idea to send one to Wendy.

B. Communication and Membership – Greg Bell

1. The articles for the *Persimmon* were received and the June issue will be out soon thanks to the work of Patricia Herrling and Wendy Kerr. The deadline for the August issue is July 1st. Marty Jenich has agreed to photograph special events, meetings, and ceremonies as a record of PLATO history and the images will be stored by Wendy in a PLATO library of photos.
2. The Committee is working on a short 5 minute video or Power Point presentation on PLATO for use by the Speakers' Bureau.
3. Greg mentioned "guerilla marketing" as a way to promote PLATO within the membership and the community. The new logo and emblem include the website URL to highlight "what we're about." A minimal run was printed and Greg asked if it was ok to print more. Tim Otis asked how they would be used. A supply will be given to the Curriculum Committee after the meeting. They can place the stickers and bookmarks in the Coordinators packets that are distributed at the September Luncheon. Greg emphasized the importance of Coordinators and PLATO Board and Committee members acting as the chief promoters and ambassadors.
4. CAM has plans to talk to the news media for the first time re the 25th Anniversary celebration.

C. Special Events - Mary Boyd

1. Mary Boyd distributed a year-end report of Special Events Committee Activities including lectures, day trips and other events. The Board commented on the impressive number and variety of activities and thanked the Committee for their diligence in organizing these opportunities for PLATO members. Tim Otis suggested that the report be submitted for inclusion in the August *Persimmon*.
2. Bob Blitzke, Special Events Committee member and Theater Subcommittee Chair, presented a proposal for theater trips to be arranged by his group. He distributed promotional literature and a tentative October 2012 through July 2013 schedule listing 5 plays at the Milwaukee Repertory and Milwaukee Chamber Theaters and the Goodman in Chicago. Also noted were 2 suggested

works at the Milwaukee Rep as possible tie-ins for PLATO literature and drama courses. Bob called these classroom-on-the-bus events.

3. Theater trips require special planning as the contracts require a 20% down payment in advance to reserve 50 tickets. The balance is paid at the event. It is estimated that approximately \$350 to \$450 would be needed up front for each of the 5 proposed plays. Additional considerations include:
 - a. Promotion may be more effective if done further in advance than usual. It was suggested that a notice of the theater trips be sent to Patricia Herrling for publication in the August *Persimmon*. The September Old World Wisconsin event and the October play could be advertised in this issue. It would be an introductory article for the theater trips as the process for handling reservations should be in place before the details are announced.
 - b. Play titles, dates, prices and other trip details could be assembled by the Special Events Committee and distributed on a flyer. It was suggested that the procedure limit reservations to one play at a time for the span of one month each time to simplify record keeping.
 - c. Since the checks must be processed by Wendy the reservations should be handled by her.
4. The proposal presented was approved by the Board. The concept was declared “great” and the use of up-front funds for reservations was approved unanimously. The Special Events Committee agreed to put together a procedure.

D. Financial Resources – Marv Beatty

The Committee met on June 8th. The report received at the end of May, shortly after the Spring Luncheon, indicated that \$2,700.00 was donated to the PLATO Fund. One generous couple gave \$1,500.00. Mary Boyd noted that this contribution came as a result of the inspiring presentation by Fred Ross at the Spring Luncheon. The balance will be reported monthly and included in the August *Persimmon*. The process for handling the contributions is in place. See proposal for making Financial Resources a Standing Committee in section VIII. A.

VI. OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Leadership Development – Patricia Becker

1. Patricia Becker reported the Fall Committee Member Recognition Luncheon is scheduled for Thursday, September 13th and the place will most likely be Biaggi’s on Junction Rd. The cost may exceed slightly the \$500.00 approved amount.

2. At their May 24th meeting the Leadership Committee discussed the attendees' reactions to Nino Amato's Spring Luncheon talk. Tim Otis will prepare an article for the August *Persimmon*. He expects to focus on the broader issues of the exchange of ideas and learning through dialogue by using the example of the luncheon speech where provocative statements were made with no opportunity for comment. Tim will place emphasis on PLATO's inviting environment as a learning organization. It was noted that the problem of exclusion also applies to some PLATO classes where tolerance of opposing views and open discussion are not always practiced.
3. The "political" topic reminded Mike Lovejoy that a visiting professor from Germany has been doing research on the contrast between Dane County and Waukesha County voters. Mike will contact George Lightbourn, President of the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, to see if the German academic might be available and interested in making a presentation to PLATO members. The Board is very interested in the possibility. As a follow up, Mike sent an email to the Board with the reply from George Lightbourn who noted that he would be happy to make the connection with Professor Torben Lutjen from the University of Dusseldorf and PLATO. Professor Lutjen will be back in the U. S. around September 15th.

B. Agora – Lauren Blough

The Editorial Board and the reviewers have completed the work of selecting visual art, prose and poetry for Volume 2 of *The Agora*. The acceptance and rejection letters have been mailed. 30 artists and authors are represented by 41 works for publication. The layout has been determined and the new volume will have the same look as the first. This cover will be very different from the last but it is also spectacular thanks to the artistry of DCS' Christina Finet. The Editorial Board is waiting for the electronic submissions and after proofreading they will be sent to Christina who will work her magic on the final product. The September publication date is on schedule.

B. 25th Anniversary Celebration – Judy Sadowsky

1. The 25th Anniversary Celebration Committee's next meeting is on July 9th. The party is scheduled for Friday, October 12, 2012 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Pyle Center in the Alumni Lounge. Early PLATO members will be invited and Judy will send a letter of invitation to the Past Presidents. Marv Beatty will update his PLATO history with details from the last 8 to 10 years for his presentation. \$2,500.00 has been approved for the event. Costs include food, rental and a cash bar.
2. Marv was able to reach Harland Samson who agreed to attend but asked for a reminder closer to the date. Fred Ross will be the Master of Ceremonies. Pat

Becker said Fred Blancke called her to request a Q & A period at the celebration. The 25th Anniversary celebration isn't the right place for fielding questions so the topic will be moved to a later Board Agenda. Possibilities mentioned for addressing Fred's request were a separate meeting dedicated to Q & A and a feedback option on the PLATO website. It was noted that a face-to-face event is more in line with Fred's expectation.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. PLATO Fee Waiver

1. Tim Otis distributed the proposal for a PLATO Fee Waiver policy. The single revision eliminated the word "only" from the last sentence so it reads: "A complete fee waiver may be implemented in unusual situations and with the approval of the PLATO President." It was felt that the fee should not be reduced to \$0, but the amount of the charge would be negotiable. The intent is that some payment be made. The transactions will be kept confidential between the applicant and Wendy Kerr, with the inclusion of the PLATO President in the instances of a complete fee waiver. The application for the reduced charge will have to be renewed annually. Marv Beatty moved that the proposal be adopted and Pat Becker seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
2. Although a note regarding the fee waiver may be added to the Membership Form, the policy will not be widely advertised. As far as we know it is not a prevalent problem now. Mary Boyd suggested that the Board review the policy and its effect within a year. Greg Bell will be visiting 100 Black Men of Madison, Inc., the local chapter of the national organization to encourage Black community participation in PLATO. He is anticipating a question about PLATO fees and asked what his reply should be. This led to a discussion about approach which resulted in the recommendation that he make a straight forward presentation about the learning and recreational opportunities provided by PLATO. Assumptions about ability to pay fees should not be made. The larger question about why PLATO does not seem to attract the non-Caucasian community is something to be investigated. Bob Blitzke referred to two plays on the theater list that have significance for the Black community, "Raisin in the Sun" and "Clybourne Park."

B. An update on the issue of PLATO providing transportation assistance will be put on a future agenda. Barry Orton will check with UW legal counsel for additional details regarding liability.

C. Tim Otis will schedule a meeting for Committee Chairs and DCS.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposal to Make Financial Resources a Standing Committee

A proposal was distributed with the recommendation for making Financial Resources a PLATO Standing Committee. Note the addition of the phrase “including the PLATO Fund” to the last sentence in the revised version. The sentence now reads: “The committee assists the Treasurer and the Board by providing oversight on the financial affairs of PLATO, including the PLATO Fund, and proposes and implements actions to promote and grow the PLATO Fund endowment.” Formed as an ad hoc committee, the members were tasked with the development of the PLATO Fund. Now that it is established they can broaden their focus to offering advice and counsel on other financial matters although promotion of the fund will remain their primary aim. The Treasurer would assemble the budget but Mike Lovejoy said he would appreciate “reality checks” from this committee. They would provide oversight and suggest changes and make recommendations to the Board. Marv Beatty made the motion to accept the proposal and Greg Bell seconded it. Motion passed unanimously. Additions to the committee would be PLATO members who have some expertise in fund raising and marketing, as well as financial and organizational management. Barry Orton will be an ex-officio member.

B. Other Issues

Greg Bell is assembling a calendar of PLATO events, meetings etc. Please submit information pertaining to your committee and he will send the completed calendar to the Board.

IX. FUTURE BUSINESS

- A. Discussion of the Board’s role in providing leadership and policy development for the PLATO organization was delayed for a future meeting. What are the Board’s roles and responsibilities in this unique organization?
- B. Update on providing transportation assistance for PLATO members with mobility issues.
- C. Schedule a meeting with DCS and PLATO Committee Chairs.
- D. Discuss possibilities for Q & A session for members requested by Fred Blancke.

Meeting adjourned at 11:19 a.m.

NOTE: Next meeting Friday, August 17, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. DCS - 21 N. Park, Room 7041.

Respectfully submitted,
Lauren Blough