

PLATO BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Friday, March 15, 2013 - 9:30 a.m.

DCS Office, 21 North Park, Madison, WI

Present: Tim Otis, Chair, Marv Beatty, Patricia Becker, Greg Bell, Sybil Better, Lauren Blough, Mary Boyd, Harold Green, Scott Kolar, Mike Lovejoy, Aleta Murray, Frank Power, Arden Trine, Barry Orton.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Tim Otis called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.
- II. **MINUTES** – The minutes of the February 15, 2013 meeting were approved with noted corrections to Patricia Herrling’s and Lauren Blough’s names. Thank you to Mary Boyd whose name will be appended as submitter.
- III. **TREASURER’S REPORT** – Mike Lovejoy distributed 3 spreadsheets detailing PLATO’s current financial status and the tentative 2013-14 Budget.
 - A. The *March 2013 Budget Report* shows: the actual 2011-12 budget adjusted to reflect the Board decision to fund scholarships from the PLATO Fund; the 2012-13 figures that indicate we will end the year with expenses slightly over budget; and, a tentative budget for 2013-14 that assumes a membership of 900 and reflects a dues increase from \$50.00 to \$60.00 as well as an increase in the DCS share from 30 to 40%. This plan does not include costs for any new initiatives such as PLATO funded administrative help for DCS or program cutbacks such as changes to *The Agora* publication schedule. \$6,000.00 in donations to host locations has yet to be expended. The amount in the “Other” field applies to costs accrued for things such as the Spring Banquet, Previews, insurance, taxes, the Coordinators’ Luncheon, course materials, bank and credit card charges. In answer to Mary Boyd’s question, Barry Orton stated that PLATO is getting a slightly decreased subsidy in return for the 10% increased share paid to DCS. Earlier reviews of services rendered by DCS indicated that PLATO would pay much more if true costs were assessed. Mary said that this should be stated in communication to members regarding the dues increase.
 - B. The *PLATO Fund History* illustrates how the UW Foundation handles the contributions to the PLATO Fund. The Foundation deposits funds received in a short term savings account (Fund 12). On a quarterly basis the money is transferred to the PLATO endowment account (Fund 32) where it is invested with a guaranteed growth of 4.5%. This spreadsheet’s data does not reflect November and December Fund contributions as the Foundation has not sent the year-end report yet. Costs for managing the PLATO Fund, including its promotion, are expended from the Fund and not from the PLATO Operating Budget.
 - C. The *PLATO Assets* sheet shows PLATO funds 1) under PLATO management - the Operating Budget as of March 2013 and 2) with the UW Foundation as of September 2012. The liquid funds in Checking, Savings and Money Market accounts total

\$37,208.44. Still to be paid from the Checking account are the contributions to locations that host PLATO courses. There was a typing error in the amount listed for the “short term dep. account” (12). It should be \$2,770.00. **MOTION:** Marv Beatty made a motion to accept the Treasurer’s Report and Arden Trine seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. Tim Otis noted that PLATO should be publishing a 2012 fiscal report but delays in the UW reporting means that we do not have the complete information regarding costs yet. Communicating with the membership via the *Persimmon* is a goal but it’s problematic because the publication schedule may not coincide with the availability of the report.

- D. Mike Lovejoy will distribute a spreadsheet to the committees with budget and year-to-date expenditures to let them know how their accounts stand. In answer to Mary Boyd’s question, it was stated that PLATO has not had an audit and, if planned for the future, the expense would have to be budgeted.

IV. PRESIDENT’S REPORT – Tim Otis

- A. James Steinbach, Director of Wisconsin Public Television, will be the speaker at the Annual Luncheon. He offered a choice of 2 topics for his address and “Our Most Precious Heritage” (referring to a nation’s art) was selected. Norm Risjord will be honored for his many years of coordinating PLATO American history courses. He has been notified and was pleased to be chosen.
- B. Tim has been sharing ideas via phone conferences with other Learning-in-Retirement organizations in Wisconsin and neighboring states. The next one scheduled is with staff at the Roosevelt University facility in Schaumburg, Illinois.

V. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. Curriculum and Facilities – Frank Power

Frank Power distributed a summary of the survey responses for the Spring Preview on February 20th at the Madison Senior Center. Attendance was estimated at 150 or so. He said the shorter first session downstairs was well-received with 88% of the 78 evaluators rating it “about right.” Forty 1st and 2nd year new members expressed satisfaction with detailed information provided by speakers from PLATO leadership, Committees representatives, and DCS. Limiting the presentations to the coordinators of new courses met with approval. More training on how to use the microphone is needed. The second session upstairs was highly rated for the access it gave attendees to the coordinators. 80% said it helped them make class registration choices. On the other hand, the PLATO committees reported that very few people visited their tables although two who ventured to the Curriculum station offered to coordinate courses and Communication and Membership did get queries about joining. The Special Events Committee did a great job with refreshments that were served upstairs during the socialization period that closed the event. Mary noted that the variety of treats

was downsized to prevent waste. There were some complaints about the lack of coffee. Frank noted that the Fall Preview will return to the “course-centric” format that provides time for all course coordinators to make presentations, and comments and suggestions gathered on February 20th will be used to further improve the process.

B. Communications and Membership – Greg Bell

1. Greg Bell distributed two handouts which had also been directed to the Leadership Committee prior to the Board meeting. The first describes in detail a proposal for the future structure of Communication and Membership which would divide the responsibilities between two committees. Continued discussion is needed.
2. Development of a dynamic PLATO website is seen as crucial to attracting and maintaining members. Development on the DCS senior learning site is not adequate for PLATO’s present and future needs as our projects are not a priority for the assigned UW staff who provide the maintenance. **MOTION:** Greg Bell made a motion to have himself and Scott Kolar from Communication and Membership explore development of a PLATO member website (separate from the UW-DCS site) that could be updated on a timely basis. Mary Boyd seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. It was suggested that the investigation should include an operational plan and associated costs. Sybil Better said that an organization that she belongs to hired a consultant to do the initial setup and then volunteers maintained their website. Barry Orton said DCS supports this initiative as he understands the frustration with delayed updates. He cautioned that websites can take a lot of time and money to maintain after the initial establishment. He also suggested that a PLATO web page with posted links should remain at the DCS site. Scott Kolar noted that the setup would have to allow the responsible parties access to pertinent pages for editing. Decisions would have to be made regarding administrative processing such as membership and event registration as well as what information to migrate from the DCS site.

C. Special Events - Mary Boyd

1. Mary Boyd distributed the draft of the Annual Luncheon menu that offers choices to address special dietary needs. Last year the costs were \$12.00 for PLATO members and \$16.00 for non-members. Mary investigated and found that the meal would run about \$16.11. This includes the coffee and tea made available to early arrivals. It does not include AV equipment rental. **MOTION:** Aleta Murray made a motion to raise the charges to \$16.00 for members and \$18.00 for non-members and Arden Trine seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

2. The events scheduled in March, April and May include a lecture by Tom Still at Oakwood West on the topic of “Early Stage Investing in Wisconsin”; a March 20th trip to the Art Institute for the Picasso exhibit; an April 12th “Art in Bloom” day trip to the Milwaukee Art Museum; and a trip to the Milwaukee Chamber Theater for the play “Jeeves in Bloom” on April 17th. Mary noted that registration was low for the April 12th trip so they investigated and found that the event was not listed on the website. If 20 people sign up they will go.

D. Financial Resources – Marv Beatty

The Committee meets next week. Marv Beatty reported that they will continue to seek ways to inform members about the PLATO Foundation. As noted in the Treasurer’s report above, the cost of the Foundation’s promotion and the scholarships will be deducted from the earnings of the Foundation endowment rather than taking the funds from the PLATO Operations budget.

VI. OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Leadership Development – Patricia Becker

1. The Leadership Committee received the proposal for restructuring the Communication and Membership Committee from Greg Bell and a memo from Frank Power regarding the need to make PLATO finances transparent to the membership. During discussion of the two issues at the March 7th meeting a question was raised about the role of the Leadership Committee. Its initial purpose was to recruit members who would assume leadership positions on committees. It has not been a policy-making body but some of the requests expect decisions from the Committee that would affect policy. Some alternatives were considered before the Committee decided to recommend that an Executive Committee of the Board be formed. Tim Otis noted that this would take a change in the PLATO By-laws and would be a good topic for discussion at a Board Retreat. See below under New Business. Sybil Better said an Executive Committee would result in another layer of bureaucracy. In her experience an Executive Committee only convenes and acts when the Board is not available. Mary Boyd pointed out that Board Meetings deal with the here and now but an Executive Committee could focus on vision and planning for the future.
2. The Committee also reflected on PLATO as a membership organization and to what degree are we involving the members. Town Meetings might be an effective way to engage. Should a Town Meeting be added to annual events? There were various ideas for distributing information and handling questions at a member forum.
3. The Committee is continuing work on the formulation of a PLATO Handbook.

B. Memorandum of Agreement Task Force – Tim Otis

The *Attachment A, Memorandum of Agreement Between UW Madison Division of Continuing Studies and the Participatory Learning and Teaching Organization (PLATO), July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2015* was distributed via email with the Board Agenda. PLATO's increased membership fee of \$60.00 and DCS upgraded share of the dues to 40% are noted in the MOA Section 6 "Membership Fees and Cost Sharing." It was agreed that the information was sufficient to describe the financial agreement between the parties. **MOTION:** Pat Becker made a motion that the MOA presented to the PLATO Board be accepted as the agreement moving forward and Sybil Better seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Raising Dues for 2013-14 – Tim Otis

The Board functionally approved an increase in the dues to \$60 and the 60% (PLATO) - 40% (DCS) split with the above vote on the Memorandum of Agreement; however, a formal vote will be taken at the April meeting. Mike Lovejoy has provided the detailed financial report with the tentative 2013-14 Budget requested by the Board at the February meeting. He noted that new initiatives have not been included in this version so new project(s) would require revisions.

B. Procedures for Informing Members About Dues Increase – Tim Otis

There will be a two-pronged approach. Tim will draft a letter to inform members of the dues increase and he will send it to the Board for review. It was decided that an open forum for all members will be scheduled for 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. prior to the Annual Luncheon at the Sheraton on May 22nd. The details will be added either to the invitation or in a separate letter accompanying the invitation. There have been reports that some members are concerned that PLATO is changing in ways that require a dues increase. It was felt that it's important to offer a Q & A session even if only a few members attend.

C. Nominating Committee – Tim Otis

The committee presented the following slate of candidates:

Nominated for: President – Pat Becker, President-elect – Mary Boyd,
Treasurer – Mike Lovejoy, Secretary – Lauren Blough,
At Large Directors – Don Reeder and Aleta Murray.

Aleta was initially elected to serve the remainder of Harold Green's 3-year term when he took the position of representative for the Curriculum Committee. That term expires in 2013 so Aleta was nominated for a subsequent 3 year term. **MOTION:** Arden Trine moved to accept the slate with the addition of Aleta Murray and Sybil Better seconded it. The motion was approved unanimously. The Board's recommendations will be presented to the membership for a vote at the Annual

Luncheon on May 22nd. The Board is looking for a successor to Treasurer Mike Lovejoy who will not serve out the full term.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. In light of the recent discussions of new initiatives and committee restructuring, Tim proposed scheduling a full day (possibly 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.) Board retreat in lieu of the June meeting. **MOTION:** Pat Becker made a motion that a Board retreat be scheduled and Marv Beatty seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. A date in May seemed a better choice. Maybe a Doodle calendar would be the best method for getting consensus on a date.

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?

Meeting adjourned at 11:24 a.m.

NOTE: Next meeting Friday, April 19, 2013 at 9:30 a.m. DCS - 21 N. Park, Room 7041.

Respectfully submitted,
Lauren Blough