

DRAFT PLATO BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Friday, November 16, 2012 - 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, Aleta Murray, Frank Power, Judy Sadowsky, Arden Trine, Wendy Kerr, Barry Orton.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Tim Otis called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m.
- II. **MINUTES** – The minutes of the September 21, 2012 meeting were approved. The October meeting was cancelled due to a lack of a quorum.
- III. **TREASURER’S REPORT** – No report. Mike Lovejoy is on vacation.
- IV. **PRESIDENT’S REPORT** – Tim Otis
 - A. Tim Otis said PLATO, DCS and the UW Alumni Association are planning on a collaborative event in the future.
 - B. Tim met with Amy Overby of the Madison Community Foundation on a proposed initiative involving PLATO and the Foundation. (See the February 17, 2012 Board minutes for a report of Mary Boyd’s meeting with Amy.)
- V. **REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES**

- A. Nominating Committee – Tim Otis

Tim introduced Aleta Murray and Sybil Better (bios attached) who were recommended by the Nominating Committee to fill the two At-Large positions on the Board vacated by Harold Green and Greg Bell. Harold and Greg are representing the Curriculum and the Communications and Membership Committees respectively.

Motion: Harold moved and Mary Boyd seconded approval of the appointments. The motion passed unanimously. They will serve the remaining time for each position (Harold Green-July 2013 and Greg Bell-July 2014) until the next election or until their term expires.

- B. Curriculum and Facilities – Harold Green and Lauren Blough

- 1. Harold Green asked Lauren Blough to review the distributed handout “2013 Winter Interim and Spring Semester Updates” (attached). Five courses will be offered during the January/February Winter 2013 Interim session and four new courses appear on the Spring 2013 Schedule. Although six coordinators will suspend their classes for spring 2013 (4 for travel or medical reasons), they plan to return in the fall. There are a few miscellaneous changes to schedules and a

host location switch from Mt. Olive Lutheran Church to Oakwood West. Wisconsin Community Bank is now called Wisconsin Bank & Trust.

2. Greg Bell noted that he is planning on starting a far westside session of “Current Events” to provide another venue for the very popular topic. He will keep the Curriculum Committee apprised of his plans. Greg is also interested in the “History of Science” and asked if the committee would help find a coordinator interested in and qualified to present a PLATO course on the subject. Harold Green replied that the Curriculum Committee is currently undertaking a process of strategic review that will address issues like accommodating grass roots ideas for courses and meeting the need for additional meeting spaces. Tim Otis asked if they had followed up on his tip regarding the availability of a “computer room” at The Gardens Independent Living. Lauren has an appointment to meet with Jesi Hirsch at The Gardens on Wednesday, November 20th.
3. Attendance rosters have been received from all but two course coordinators and those are expected soon. With 100% response the total number of people attending all of the fall 2012 courses will exceed 1,000. Counts of individuals and how many classes they attend will be compiled. Names of those not found in the PLATO Directory have been sent to Wendy Kerr. She checks to see if they have joined or renewed since the Directory was printed and sends reminders to those who are not paid members. Residents of Capitol Lakes, Oakwood West and Coventry do not have to join PLATO to attend classes.

B. Communications and Membership – Greg Bell

1. The committee met on Thursday, November 15th. They have four new members. Greg Bell said their mission going forward is to continue working on expanding organization membership. They intend to reach out to participants at PLATO classes they attend to get an idea of the reception and to publish articles about the courses.
2. They also devoted meeting time to a discussion of the articles for the January *Persimmon*. The submission deadline is December 1st.
3. Scott Kolar reported that the DCS webmaster, Celeste Anton, has resigned. No job description has been issued yet and DCS is unsure if there will be a replacement. In the interim the Director of Marketing is developing a plan. Some routine posting can still be done, but PLATO Committees should be aware that large scale changes to the website cannot be handled at this time.
4. Wendy is tabulating membership demographics. The current count is 830. Greg Bell is continuing to plan a Membership Survey and welcomes suggestions for inclusion.

C. Special Events - Mary Boyd

1. Mary Boyd noted that Chazen tours of the Uffizi exhibition were very popular. 50 and 47 people turned up for the two November tours.
2. The two buses reserved for the “Sense and Sensibility” theater trip to Milwaukee on January 2nd are almost full. Bob Blitzke has also reserved 2 buses for the Chicago theater trip in February to see “Other Desert Cities.”
3. A tour of the Chicago Art Institute is planned for March. A new committee member is organizing a bus trip for “Arts in Bloom” at the Milwaukee Art Museum. A few series of lectures, one health related, are being discussed.
4. Mary asked for a policy statement for handling the issue of nonmembers filling slots on bus trips. Should people who are not PLATO members be allowed to register for the trips? Should they pay a more than members pay? Tim Otis said he and Bob Blitzke will develop a proposal to present to the Board.
5. Mary distributed a flyer for the Madison Senior Center's Classic English Tea on Friday, December 7 from 2-4 pm. Purchase your \$16 tickets by Monday, December 3. All proceeds benefit the Madison Senior Center's programs and activities. Call 266-6581. Mary said this is an important fund raising event for the center.

D. Financial Resources – Marv Beatty

1. Marv Beatty reported that a letter was sent to PLATO members to encourage additional donations to the PLATO Foundation. Between \$14,000 and \$15,000 has been received but contributions have slowed recently.
2. 501 (c) (3) status is still pending.
3. The Financial Resources Committee is searching for 3 or 4 new members with a financial background in fund development and marketing. The committee is focusing on long range planning and fund development.

VI. OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Leadership Development – Patricia Becker

1. The new member orientation may be scheduled as a prelude to the Spring 2013 Preview at the Madison Senior Center.
2. There has been some discussion about working with the Curriculum Committee to train leaders on how to run meetings and how to manage nonprofit organizations. CAM has done well with recruitment.

3. Patricia Becker reported on the October 5-6th WALL Conference in Oshkosh that she attended. PLATO was the first Learning In Retirement organization in the state. There are 14 LIRs in different cities including one in Marquette MI. The average membership is 414 and the average annual fee is \$45 (ranging from \$20 to \$100). Some organizations have a basic membership fee but also charge for each course; some offer only single lectures and no multi-session courses. All WALL members have websites and one has a Facebook account. The Oshkosh LIR employs a half-time staff person for clerical support. Chippewa Valley LIR disengaged from UW Stout to maintain control of their funds. They did not send a representative to the conference. To encourage membership in committees some offer a Volunteer of the Year Award. Others offer Corporate Memberships, e.g. to retirement communities whose members then get reduced LIR organization fees. Guest passes which provide details on how to register with the organization are issued by some LIRs as incentives to join. To facilitate leadership, some prepare a handbook for each officer and committee chair outlining duties and timelines, considered especially important for the Treasurer.

B. The Agora - Lauren Blough

The announcement soliciting submissions for Volume 3 of *The Agora* has been posted and the review subcommittees have been formed. The committee lacks an editor-in-chief but all tasks for production of the new edition have been assigned. Edna Canfield has approached several people but none were willing to take over this year. The committee has four new members, two of whom have had pieces published in *The Agora*. The next step may be to advertise for an editor-in-chief.

C. 25th Anniversary Celebration – Judy Sadowsky

The 25th Anniversary Celebration was a success. 120 people attended. The facilities, food and service in the Alumni Lounge at the Pyle Center were excellent and the presentations were enjoyable. CAM arranged to have two photographers record the event. Look for photos and a story in the January *Persimmon*. The celebration was also mentioned in the *Wisconsin State Journal*.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Transportation Assistance

After further discussion it was recommended that 1) we could ask coordinators to mention that some participants might need rides and others might provide them; and 2) Aleta Murray suggested that a list of companies that provide transportation for those with mobility issues be published in the *Persimmon*.

B. Website Issues and Plans

The latest redesign took access to the PLATO webpages back a few steps, but in light of the DCS webmaster's resignation, this discussion will have to be postponed.

C. Q & A Session for PLATO Members

General meetings that designated time for Q & A were not well attended in the past. Frank Power suggested that a Q & A session might be incorporated into the new member orientation proposed by Pat Becker for the Preview. It would provide attendees with the opportunity to learn about the organization and to obtain information about PLATO course offerings. The proposal will be discussed further at the January Board meeting.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Administrative Change Recommendations

Tim Otis noted that the growth in PLATO membership, courses and activities puts more pressure on administrative support. He, Barry Orton and Laura Ingram, Continuing Studies Associate Dean for Budget and Personnel, met to discuss methods for addressing the issue. In the past everything was funneled through Wendy but with the increase in her DCS responsibilities, a fundamental change is needed in the way PLATO tasks are handled. DCS has also requested a higher financial contribution from PLATO. One proposal was to shift daily activities generated by PLATO such as answering the phone, opening and preparing mail, and keeping activities records (bus trips registrations, membership rolls) up to date. If a system could be developed that would allow passworded access to the databases then volunteers could be recruited. Barry Orton said that space is available in the Retirement Association Office. A PC could be installed. Wendy's current phone number (with voice mail) could be transferred there and she would be assigned a new number.

Volunteers could be recruited from the 3 main PLATO Committees (CAM, Curriculum, and Special Events) or someone could be hired on a contract basis. It was also suggested that someone who would organize volunteer activities could be hired for fewer hours to lower the cost. Volunteers might be reimbursed for parking costs. The office would have to be sufficiently staffed to answer phone queries and voice mail. Aleta Murray is a Master Gardner and she said those volunteers have a regular schedule with alternates ready to fill in if someone can't make their assigned time. Sybil Better agreed and said that her experience with the Madison Civics Club attests to the need for an organizer to keep the team on track. Pat Becker said that unless someone was paid to do the job things would fall through the cracks. At \$12/hr and 8 hours per week it would cost PLATO \$5,000.00 per year. Maybe part-time help should be hired to get the process underway.

Greg Bell offered to devise a skill set expected of a person hired on contract. Harold noted that consideration should be given to liability and bonding for anyone who would be handling checks and money. The following people will serve on a Task Force to investigate the possibilities for addressing the issue of administrative support and making recommendations for change to the Board: Tim Otis, Pat Becker, Greg Bell, Lauren Blough, Aleta Murray, Wendy Kerr and Barry Orton. Tim Otis will set up a meeting.

A discussion followed re raising membership dues to assist with funding part-time help and also to alleviate the revenues pressure PLATO is experiencing while operating at a deficit this year. If dues are increased too much it might result in fewer members but Marv Beatty pointed out that the rate has been \$50.00 since 2001. Arden Trine suggested that the \$25,000.00 in general operating reserves could be tapped. He also asked what qualifies as an appropriate use of donations. Donations are directed to the endowment for scholarships. Sybil Better suggested that membership forms could be revised to include a line that says: PLATO annual dues are \$xx.xx. Would you like to contribute an additional amount? This approach might yield results when PLATO has achieved 501 (c) (3) status.

- B. Frank Power suggested a holiday get together. Tim Otis will check his schedule but tentatively offered to host lunch at his house on Friday, December 14th.

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 11:17 a.m.

NOTE: No meeting in December. Next meeting Friday, January 18, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. DCS - 21 N. Park, Room 7041.

Respectfully submitted,
Lauren Blough