PLATO Leadership Strategic Issues Survey Report

Response Statistics

	Count	Percent
Complete	55	90.16
Partial	6	9.84
Total	61	

Eighty four PLATO current or past leaders were invited to complete a survey. Sixty-one submitted their surveys for a response rate of 73%.

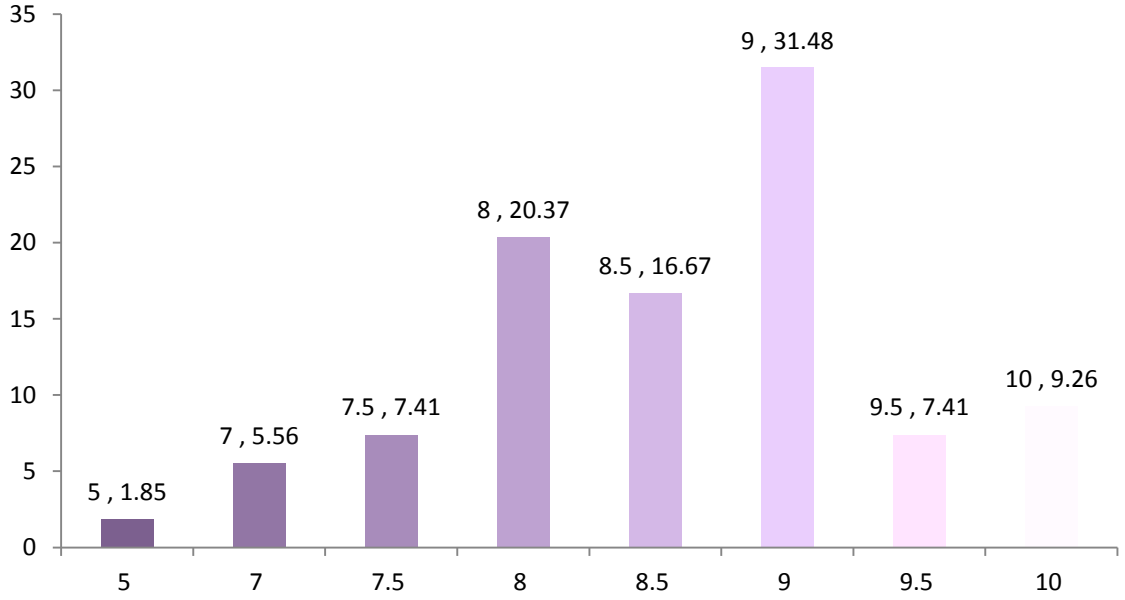
What, from your perspective, is the fundamental purpose of PLATO as an organization?

1. Continuing intellectual stimulation.
2. Education and socialization
3. Education and socializing for the over 50 crowd who are interested in intellectual and artistic pursuits.
4. Encourage and facilitate lifelong learning
5. Fundamental purpose of PLATO is to connect in learning opportunities with other interested retired people.
6. Home for life-long learners.
7. I am in agreement with PLATO's vision statement: VISION PLATO, the Participatory Learning and Teaching Organization, promotes opportunities for intellectual and cultural enrichment for the senior community.
8. I believe that the courses and activities offered help all members in their pursuit of learning and experiencing new topics and sharing cultural, social and topical settings.
9. Involve older people, who are interesting in a continuing spectrum of learning that includes classes, lectures, arts and other events and social activities where they can meet new people and explore new ideas.
10. Learning, teaching and socialization for older adults.
11. Lifelong learning.
12. Lifelong learning
13. Lifelong learning with social opportunities
14. Mental and social health of its members
15. Participatory learning
16. PLATO's fundamental purpose is to provide a way for older, mainly retired, people to continue learning in an informal, social context.
17. Provide classes of interest and an opportunity for some social interaction
18. Provide educational opportunities and information to members on subjects or issues in which they have interest or desire to increase their understanding and knowledge.

19. Provide learning opportunities for seniors as well as the opportunity to interact with seniors with similar interests.
20. Provide lifelong learning opportunities for Madison area retirees in the form of courses and events.
21. Provide opportunities for participatory learning, social interactions, and support for others to have access to education.
22. Provide opportunities to continue and to explore new areas of interest through many pathways.
23. Providing mature or maturing citizens with an opportunity to continue to learn and/or continue to teach. And to provide appropriate services to the community.
24. Serve its members by providing cultural, educational and social opportunities for personal enrichment.
25. The purpose of PLATO is the continuing growth of its members in knowledge, skills, examination of ideas, and the development of supported personal positions on issues.
26. To act as a forum for the exchange of ideas, drawing on the knowledge and talent of the Madison-area community.
27. To be one of the primary sources for lifelong learning for members including social, educational, travel and cultural opportunities. This includes the opportunity to create these opportunities by being a course coordinator, or event organizer, etc.
28. To enable retired people to continue their learning, to share their interests with others, to explore new areas of experience, and to maintain or increase their connectedness with the city and the university.
29. To enable seniors to continue to learn.
30. To encourage seniors to remain engaged in community and in life by providing a vehicle for their talents, interests, desire to do useful things, for friendships, for interesting and health-promoting things to do.
31. To engage a community of learners in the support and promotion of the process of obtaining ideas and information from different sources, including outside the membership.
32. To give post-retirement folks the chance to learn from the experts in our community and the experts who are retired the opportunity to teach other oldsters from their expertise.
33. To involve seniors (mostly) in lifelong learning in a group setting.
34. To offer a way for like-minded people (lifelong learners) to stay intellectually engaged through activities (courses, events, lectures) that offer opportunities to learn and interact.
35. To offer classes of interest to Madison area seniors that provide intellectual stimulation and social connections.
36. To offer courses that both educate and enrich senior learners.
37. To offer opportunities for enrichment of people's lives through educational classes and lectures, visits to performances and to interesting sites and social interactions.
38. To offer seniors a myriad of opportunities to continue learning about and participating in lifelong learning experiences.
39. To offer the opportunity for older adults to exchange knowledge and ideas with interested and interesting people.
40. To promote opportunities for seniors to explore further education and interests.
41. To provide a structure to pursue my interest in increasing my knowledge of a variety of subjects by interaction and discussion with other knowledgeable members.

42. To provide a wide array of participatory learning opportunities, and teaching opportunities on significant topics and issues at diverse geographic locations to anyone interested in learning and growing intellectually.
43. To provide an outlet for learning and socializing for older adults.
44. To provide courses of interest and special events of interest in convenient settings and times for its members.
45. To provide diverse opportunities for participatory continuing education and cultural activities to our members.
46. To provide educational and social opportunities to Seniors utilizing the talents and knowledge of the retired population of Madison at a free or reasonable cost.
47. To provide intellectual and cultural opportunities for its primarily senior-aged membership through a system of member organized and led courses, and other activities. More recently, a charitable purpose was added to assist youth and other low-income individuals with opportunities to prepare for and access educational opportunities beyond the K-12 level.
48. To provide learning and social interaction for seniors, along with trips to interesting places and plays.
49. To provide members with opportunities to pursue life-long learning in a user-friendly environment.
50. To provide opportunities for individuals to pursue continued learning in a variety of settings, i.e. classes, social and outings.
51. To provide opportunities for learning, social interaction and meaning in the lives of people who have retired or are nearing the end of their work careers.
52. To provide opportunities for Madison area seniors to expand their knowledge and continue the path of lifelong learning. It's also an opportunity for creating many good social contacts and interactions in providing a way for seniors to explore theater and travel that may not have been accessible to them.
53. To provide opportunities for people no longer spending their entire day earning a living to take part in new experiences and/or join with others in mutually enjoyable activities.
54. To provide opportunities for senior learners to explore a variety of learning possibilities in multiple disciplines.
55. To provide opportunities for seniors to continue with intellectual enrichment that don't require the greater investment of time etc. needed in auditing university courses, and along with that, opportunities to build social community.
56. To provide stimulating, provocative and interesting experiences and classes on a wide variety of subjects.
57. To support the intellectual curiosity of the members, and to provide cultural opportunities to explore with other members.

From your vantage point, how effective is PLATO at achieving this purpose on the following 10-point scale?



Count	Response
1	5
3	7
4	7.5
11	8
9	8.5
17	9
4	9.5
5	10

	Statistics
Total Responses	54.00
Average	8.55
StdDev	0.91
Skipped	4.00

Given your effectiveness rating, what should PLATO do to move its effectiveness to a "10?"

1. Add more classes that are relevant to community issues.
2. Address the problem of courses being full before members learn what courses are being offered. This is an issue with some of the art courses.
3. Be open to offering courses not only given by members (and thus driven by their interests and willingness to conduct) but also by faculty and other experts; also to be open to developing/establishing affinity groups within the larger organization in a planned way (the theatre lovers group being an individual initiative). This could be a way to gain more engagement (and participation) within a 1,000+ member organization (creating smaller "circles")
4. Continue efforts to diversify its membership base.
5. Continue recruiting PLATO members to serve on the Curriculum and Special Events Committees who search for attractive and popular course offerings and Special Event offerings.
6. Continue to support humanitarian endeavors that engage discussion with the larger community while still offering the less provocative courses that some members want.
7. Continue to tap active members for new ideas.
8. Continue what we are doing.
9. Continue with the program and provide additional course offerings
10. Develop and provide other methods or platforms (perhaps web-based) which expand the ability of members to provide other members with information that may be of interest to them, e.g., provide handouts, book, periodical or other resource recommendations, web-link recommendation to those that cannot attend courses, but may still have interest in the subject.
11. Difficult to say. Some deficiencies are inherent. (e.g. Classes filled, class conflict, etc.) Perfection is not to be expected.
12. Emphasize to all our members that we are indeed an "exchange" organization, meaning that every member has an obligation to put in as well as take out.
13. Encourage more experimentation and innovation to improve current services and products and develop new ones. Invest more time in team building efforts to develop and sustain a robust corps of PLATO leaders.
14. Ensure members have ample opportunities to provide ideas for future events. Offer online courses and events to increase participation by members who are not always able to travel to events. Partner with other organizations to sponsor special events and programs.
15. Expand the PLATO organization by recruiting more members.
16. Greater variety of course topics.
17. Have classes, lectures in locations where parking and/or extended walking is necessary to get to a PLATO event. The community, in general, is not aware of PLATO, and there is sometimes a perception that PLATO is only for University graduates.
18. I believe PLATO would benefit from greater exposure through marketing.
19. I believe there is always room for improvement regardless of how effective an organization it is, especially in terms of involving members who are barely involved.
20. I don't have any specific ideas but would think that there would be some way to connect with the larger community in seeking liaison with social justice groups that might have places for elder wisdom and experiences of our members.
21. I gave it a 10.

22. I really think we do a very good job, but there is always room for improvement. Ideas for expanding from a mainly "academic" focus to include more nature based or alternative types of learning or cultural/social opportunities is a good move. Finding ways to share the fruits of our classes should be continued to be explored, as well as informal ways for people to continue their discussions in some type of online forum or blog.
23. Improve course offerings --- including shorter course or lecture offerings. Perhaps, short courses and lectures belong with the curriculum committee.
24. In my opinion, PLATO does not communicate effectively with PLATO member on an ongoing basis. Members receive e-mails, etc., but never information relating to how PLATO is doing as an organization, new directions the board is planning, etc. Surveys are sent to members but they never know the results of said surveys so have no idea as to the what's happening with the organization. I believe that is one reason the board is doing the strategic planning and hope that the outcomes will be communicated to the members.
25. Increase the breadth of topics to be discussed. Hopefully this would increase the participation of the members.
26. Involve a higher percentage of membership in organizational leadership and participation.
27. It's working hard on achieving these ends. Through the university, Madison is fortunate in having a wealth of lectures and courses available to older adults at no cost or low cost. The unique aspect of PLATO is the interactive nature of the courses and the incredible people taking part and leading. That interactive intellectual socialization on a high level must be encouraged to continue and to grow.
28. Let friendships develop on their own and not forcing interaction between members.
29. Make sure that the teachers are really expert in their subjects or at least are able to call on experts to teach. I went to the first meeting of one series and the person who was called on to speak didn't know beans about the subject.
30. Make sure the Curriculum committee informs and supports course/outing leaders fully as they conduct their offerings. Publicize and promote all offerings and activities widely in the greater Madison communities.
31. More classes and lectures on current issues.
32. More courses, courses demanded by members, more courses closer to where people live (particularly the east side).
33. More interesting classes in more locations especially on the East Side.
34. Nobody is perfect. I measure success on a class by class basis. The classes that are of interest to me are successful. Diversity of subject is critical.
35. Nothing more. It's already a 10.
36. Offer alternatives for members that have physical limitations as they age.
37. Offer more and more varied courses and other experiences, perhaps moving outside the box of classroom, lecture room venues. (And no, I don't have any ideas how to do that.)
38. Offer more classes that pertain to art and literature. Also offer classes that involve volunteering in the community.
39. Offer more classes. Be more diverse. Increase the use of outside consultants in management.
40. Offer more courses.
41. Offer more courses. Consider fee based offerings. Modest fees.
42. Perhaps, in this particularly divisive and challenging political environment, PLATO can offer classes that help seniors discern what their particular interests and talents are and how these can be used in the political area to improve their own lives, the lives of those around

them, and their communities. Reduce global issues to practical, doable local action. Demonstrate "how to" and encourage participation. So often it seems seniors have good intentions, but often those good intentions are diluted by too many causes and a need for leadership and know how. I would also like to see an emphasis on self-care measures, such as meditation. Only a calm center can achieve goals of healing self and nation. Also, a study of passive resistance might be useful.

43. Plan courses and/or lectures far enough in advance to allow time to prepare a catalog of all within a selected time period. Something for people to browse and say, "Hey, why don't I try that?"
44. PLATO needs to make its mission more transparent to the members so there will be a greater willingness to support the organization.
45. PLATO should actively seek members of color and those living on the south, east, and north sides of Madison.
46. Publicize the organization's goals and accomplishments to the broader community to attract those with new ideas, experience, tools and energy. A primary goal of PLATO should be to mentor new leadership.
47. Suggestion: Some time during each regular term, publish a round-up of comments or summaries from each course (one comment per course) just to let everyone know how this course is going, what's new or surprising or important about it, etc. Comments could come from a class member or the coordinator; the aim would be to remind everyone what a variety of things are available to them besides their own courses.
48. The quality of classes varies. As PLATO is a volunteer organization, I do not see a way around this.
49. There has been a recent effort to offer more vehicles for learning not just the traditional classes. This should be encouraged. Local tours, field trips, theater, social gatherings and others are all opportunities for learning. They are as important a way to learn as courses are to other people.
50. Unfortunately some classes fill because of their popularity and it is a disappointment when availability is not possible.
51. We are a middle class, financially secure group of primarily white people and we enjoy those privileges. However many of us have social consciences and would like do something useful with our beneficent feelings. Many of us spent our professional lives helping people and if PLATO could funnel some of our talents into a practical purpose aside from financial support it would be one more way of continuing to be a great organization.
52. We haven't ventured into national or international travel yet.
53. While many classes, etc. are offered, there are often too many of them that reach quota and lock people out. Frustrating for those who can't get into the programs they desire.
54. Within PLATO's volunteer structure, continue to encourage more members to step forward to help make our programs grow/thrive. It takes lots of willing helpers to carry out the ideas of the organization.

One thing that PLATO is really great at doing is . . .

1. Bringing groups of people together for any activity provides social interaction, new friendship and exchange of ideas among diverse group of people.
2. Catering to the interests of the majority.
3. Coming up with great ideas that go nowhere.
4. Communicating course and field trip information to its members.

5. Consistently offering courses and events that grow its membership.
6. Consistently providing so many courses of great variety.
7. Creating an interest in subjects that I otherwise would not have thought of.
8. Digging up trip material for art lovers, garden lovers, and bored people.
9. Doing a lot with almost 100 percent volunteer labor.
10. Doing so much with so few volunteers.
11. Encouraging and supporting greater Special Events offerings.
12. Evaluating its procedures and trying to constantly improve, which is why I marked most as adequate but not exceptional. PLATO as an organization does not rest on past accomplishments, but constantly tries to improve on every level. This means our lectures and local trips are really good, but can be even better. If we can find other venues besides facilities for the aged for some lectures we can attract a younger more diverse crowd. We are somewhat limited by the facilities and parking circumstances available to us. We are a volunteer organization limited by people's efforts.
13. Great sessions/topics led by knowledgeable, competent leaders.
14. I continue to believe the core of our success is offering courses and activities that are interesting and enjoyable.
15. I have enjoyed and been engaged in all the courses that I have taken. Courses that did not sustain my interest were dropped.
16. Informing computer users about upcoming events.
17. Keeping membership costs low.
18. Managing its operations - Louise Fowler is a gem.
19. Notifying members of course opportunities via e-mail.
20. Obviously meeting the course/event needs of its members, judging by their popularity and the surveys that show that is the most popular reason for people joining PLATO.
21. Of course, I can only speak from my own experience with PLATO governance which is very limited. Louise provides very good office support. She always promptly answers emails directed to her. Her presence at meetings such as the Agora Editorial Board is always helpful; Bob Blitzke and partner do a magnificent job planning trips, making them enticing, and asking for feedback; those responsible for producing the Agora have done, and continue to do, a great service to the PLATO organization. The financial sponsorship by the PLATO BOD is money well spent; coordinators are angels in disguise.
22. Offering a diversity of opportunities.
23. Offering a variety of courses and events.
24. Offering an assortment of interesting courses.
25. Offering an excellent variety of courses, and providing good leadership for those offered.
26. Offering excellent courses in a friendly environment.
27. Offering lots of special events and courses.
28. Offering many and diverse classes.
29. Offering SMALL GROUP discussion courses.
30. Organizing outings.
31. Organizing theatre and museum trips. Bob is doing a superb job!
32. Organizing their courses.
33. Organizing trips, providing the information on the trips, has a great system to sign-up and pay, reminding you of the upcoming trip you have signed up for and the arrangements for the trips.

34. Providing a huge array of really interesting courses.
35. Providing a large number of courses and events and a more or less continuous basis.
36. Providing a slate of courses and events that meets a real variety of interests.
37. Providing broad spectrum of courses.
38. Providing courses that interest a variety of people.
39. Providing exceptional educational opportunities at minimal cost.
40. Providing information to members so that they will be able to participate fully if they wish. It's up to the individual members to learn as much as they can about the organization and then decide if they wish to participate. PLATO does a good job of giving members this info.
41. Providing members with a variety of offerings.
42. Providing opportunities for creative and energetic members like Bob Blitske to develop new areas of lifelong learning.
43. Providing the course, trip and lecture opportunities and expanding the same based on participation by members.
44. Providing useful and interesting courses at low cost and engaging it's membership to volunteer and share their skills.
45. Taking advantage of the creativity and energy of the volunteers
46. The class content and the Special Events Art trips.
47. The quality of the courses and lectures offered.
48. The wonderful courses offered, lectures planned and the trips available to members.
49. Their theater trips! Everything from selection to organization to excellent communication to convenience is just amazing.

One thing that PLATO needs to work on to improve its services to members is . . .

1. Add recreational services, like swimming, biking, walking, hiking, skiing, tennis, and golf opportunities and more social opportunities.
2. Be a little less rigid and more open to ideas, approaches that are not necessarily in line with "the way we've done it before."
3. Behind-the-scenes support for coordinators.
4. Classes fill up before some members even know they exist.
5. Communicate in other ways than just by email - some members don't have computers and/or aren't adept at using them
6. Communicating, communicating, communicating! And finding ongoing ways to get good feedback on members' interests and needs in order to better tailor classes, lectures and tours that support those stated interests.
7. Communication with members, and orientation to those members who volunteer services.
8. Consider attempting to ensure that classes don't become too large to be manageable. Guess that's up to the facilitator.
9. Continuing classes tend to become self-sustaining communities, with continuing membership, and new members may find it hard to feel welcomed and integrated.
10. Continuing to adapt to and adopt changing technology and methods of engagement (use of social media for example).
11. Convincing more members to participate in leadership and/or organizational activities.

12. Develop a dedicated corps of team-builder leaders to recruit, dedicated committee members.
13. Develop a more modern (i.e. technically savvy) way of communicating with and recruiting new members. Potential members (people in mid 60s) have spent the latter part of their careers using mobile devices and social media, yet I frequently encounter resistance to changing the way PLATO wants to do things. If PLATO does not start communicating the way people in the 21st century do, then it will become obsolete.
14. Digging up what interests members want to take part in.
15. Diversity educational programs.
16. Efficiency within some committees.
17. Emphasizing small group discussion courses.
18. Encourage some of our very talented seniors to consider creating new courses of a more intellectually advanced nature. Find new venues where hands on courses can be offered, such as scientific laboratories, studios for drawing and painting, life drawing, ceramics, printmaking, music, singing, dancing, composing, and let the Madison senior world know that we are offering such courses in appropriate venues.
19. Engage people with more diverse opinions, experiences and cultures.
20. Finding volunteers to do the work.
21. Getting more feedback from members on programs, involving more members in the business of PLATO.
22. Give more advice on securing a venue for a possible future course.
23. Improve communication.
24. Improve course offerings.
25. Improve the news about courses, special events and trends within PLATO.
26. Increase the ethnic diversity of membership and coordinators.
27. Keep working on strengthening socializing opportunities.
28. Making sure course offerings of long standing are fresh and up to date.
29. More in depth courses and more variety.
30. New members need a guide/mini-handbook on how to get the most out of a PLATO membership: an expanded Preview (in writing) that tells people how to access classes, trips--especially, if they are not very computer-literate.
31. No comments
32. None I am aware of.
33. PLATO should actively seek members of color and those living on the south, east, and north sides of Madison.
34. PLATO's on-line sites are helpful, informative, and beautiful. I just wonder how much they are used? Perhaps membership needs to be led to them. Perhaps additional "columns" and content could be included to capture more interest: commentary by members, particularly about class content; personal commentary by BOD members about themselves, their PLATO positions and their personal aims would go a long way to familiarizing members to what goes on behind the curtain. Along with personal commentary, I would like to see photos, so when I meet them, I'll know them.
35. Possibly improve the orientation of new members to all that PLATO ha to offer.
36. Promoting PLATO to the broader community.
37. Provide more locations for classes
38. Recruiting and providing training for new volunteers.

39. Recruiting volunteers to take on more leadership roles.
40. Solicit a more racially and ethnically diverse membership.
41. The use of the telephone rather than the website for communication.
42. To figure out how to engage more of the members in the work of PLATO support. I'm not saying the leaders don't try, but I wonder why there isn't a more robust response from members who should be more active in the maintenance of the organization.
43. To improve our orientation literature or welcome to new members. Not that we do a bad job...it could just be better when someone joins for the first time. Maybe a welcome coffee/tea get-together at two different locations for orientation and a personal welcome and questions?
44. To spread the classes around the county. Courses should be offered on the east side of Madison as well as in communities surrounding Madison. There needs to be a group whose purpose is to begin to spread the word, including recruiting and supporting coordinators, advertising the fact that PLATO is in the community and etc. Not an easy job, but it can be done.
45. Try to involve more members on committees. A good understanding of what their responsibilities would be ahead of time might make volunteering less intimidating. For new committee members, clear direction on performing tasks need to be in place. Learning by mistakes leads to a lot of wasted time and effort.
46. Using new technologies to reach old technology-favoring members.
47. Using technology to extend the reach of courses and events.
48. Work on improving the infrastructure to support the mission.

The greatest single challenge facing PLATO over the next five years is . . .

1. Accommodate new members' interests and locate accessible sites throughout the Madison Metropolitan area.
2. Adapt to and address the changing needs of members based on a changing world and changing perspectives of the membership (i.e., the style, values, experiences, income, etc. of members born in 1944 may likely be different than members born in 1960).
3. Address the issue of courses closing out too early.
4. Being open to change without losing sight of what we have been and what we are.
5. Broaden the base of membership, and retain the atmosphere of collegiality.
6. Continuing to grow membership (at rate of 9% annually) while continuing to provide quality services. To grow membership we will need to provide more courses, lectures, social gatherings, trips to accommodate new members. With the economic stresses on students and educational institution, it may be difficult for PLATO to continue to provide inexpensive social and educational services.
7. Creating opportunities for all groups to participate such as Hispanic and African-American.
8. Developing PLATO's organizational structure to manage expected growth.
9. Diversity of members.
10. Engaging the next generation of seniors who may have different areas of interest.
11. Engaging with a wider demographic and ethnic segment of the community.
12. Expanding offerings & memberships without enough paid administrative support and space that is PLATO directed and not just a tiny room at DCE.
13. Extensive reliance on a volunteer model with very limited paid staff. Part of the problem is that committees, particularly special events, decide on trips and other events without

giving adequate consideration to the effects on the organization. Much of Louise's workload results from the demands of special events.

14. Finding space for enough courses to accommodate an increased membership.
15. Getting the word out to the community of older people that Plato exists!
16. Growing membership.
17. Growing organization.
18. Growing the membership and diversifying membership.
19. Growth of membership pool - baby boomers.
20. Handling the diverse requirements/wants of a growing membership. The challenges come in the forms of course content and delivery.
21. Identity; agenda; mission--creating and publishing guidelines for course creation, lectures and trips that honor these.
22. Increasing ethnic diversity.
23. It seems that the same people keep teaching courses - I would think burnout is looming
24. Keeping membership active with projects and informed on topics they really want to experience. For both, a sensitive survey of members is probably required.
25. Keeping membership steady.
26. Looking for new ways to increase membership.
27. Maintaining a strong volunteer corps throughout all the functions of the organization.
28. Maintaining and growing participation with more courses and locations while being careful as they expand into new programing so as not to forget their "original mission."
29. Maintaining its consistency and providing accessible locations for its variety of courses.
30. Maintaining organizational capabilities to provide for membership growth.
31. Managing growth - we need to explore the idea of an executive director and/or a having at least one full-time staff person; a single part time administrator (no matter how competent) will not be sufficient. Funding growth - we need to explore ways to have budget necessary to consider add staff, paid lecturers etc.
32. Managing our growth while still keeping the sense of community and to meet the new/different needs of a more digital oriented member.
33. Maybe finding enough people to lead the courses Enrolling people of all ethnic and social groups
34. Meeting the expectations and needs of an expanding membership as a volunteer member-led organization.
35. New younger members of a different generation will be retiring. They will be energetic and will reflect the values of their generation. Our challenge is to accommodate PLATO to meet the needs of a younger generation, to accept young leadership, and to recognize that needs, values and concerns may be different. Evening classes, socials, lectures may be desired and that should be considered as an option. The point is to keep PLATO open minded about change, even if it means changing goals or methods. Right now PLATO is doing very well.
36. Offering courses and events that appeal to a wide age-range to keep current members involved and attract new members.
37. Offering more diverse courses and disbanding stale courses.
38. PLATO should actively seek members of color and those living on the south, east, and north sides of Madison.

39. Probably pleasing the oldest members AND the youngest ones. I speak as one of the oldest (82). So I know what I am talking about.
40. Proving the appropriate number of courses, lectures, tours, etc. that are of interest to its members.
41. Rapid growth with higher expectations from members; folks forget that it takes volunteers to make it all happen; need for more paid staff time to assist volunteer efforts.
42. Reduction in funding resources as results of the current political climate.
43. Relevance.
44. Remaining pertinent in a very rapidly changing political climate.
45. Remaining relevant to its membership.
46. Replacing current leadership.
47. Space and time for an expanded curriculum.
48. Staying relevant by offering new and varied events with dedicated leaders with the technical skill necessary.
49. To maintain or increase the level of involvement of the members in the courses and trips.
50. Weak Membership recruitment efforts. Methods such as radio ads and speeches at senior centers seem stuck in the 20th century. Between 2017 and 2021, PLATO will be recruiting people who today are in their late 50s and early 60s and contemplating how to spend their time in retirement. Reaching out to those approaching retirement using modern methods is critical. This requires data driven efforts, willingness to experiment with new methods, and reinvigorating membership efforts.

Looking outside of PLATO (in such areas as political changes, demographic shifts, the economy, current and emerging technologies, changing social norms/mores, changes at the UW, and so forth) what do you see as the most significant issues and factors that could offer PLATO great opportunities if it were to take advantage of them?

1. A closer relationship with all academic departments for special lectures, events, and course access. 2. Wider and greater access and use of technology for its members. 3. Access to courses on-line that are not currently offered.
1. A great speakers' series.
2. A growing retired population of interested older adults in the Madison area.
3. A larger PLATO presence as part of the UW. More use of technologies to do live course presentations, off-site course presentations, videotaping courses and on-line courses if the membership is interested in utilizing access through technology.
4. Allowing methods for organizing to support things that concern older folks in the community, such as the horrible captioning on TV news shows that often changes meanings entirely and the need to support legislation to make hearing aids affordable for all. And maybe having a committee compile references to affordable services, discounts and purchasing sites for seniors while we're at it. I.e. does everyone know that the Madison library lends all the Great Courses I've ever been interested in.
5. Any of these could be used to grow PLATO. We have become somewhat satisfied with the organization; it is time to think outside the box.
6. Baby boomers anxious for opportunities for life-long learning.
7. Being less elite and incorporating a more diverse membership.

8. Biggest opportunity comes from within my generation of Baby Boomers - the number of people retiring over the next several years will be tremendous and they will be looking for ways to stay engaged.
9. Challenges: the increasing number of baby boomer retirees is bringing in new talent and a more tech-savvy membership, with opportunities to expand web based programs etc.
10. Combining with the UW Retirement group. There seems to be much redundancy in offerings.
11. Continue to take advantage of the expertise available on campus.
12. Distance learning, can we provide a quality learning experience without the participants necessarily having to go to a physical class location? social networking PLATO acquiring our own facility
13. Effective uses of social media.
14. Expanding venues, developing more intensive courses, broadening the curriculum to appeal to various subgroups, having socialization around particular points of interest or concerns. Warning: stay away from politics. Taking a political perspective will destroy PLATO. There are plenty of venues around to take part in politics if a person wants to do so. PLATO is not the place for political activism; PLATO is the place to pursue knowledge and to freely and respectfully exchange thought.
15. Facilitating volunteers for other community organizations - perhaps combined with some coursework. (Rick Orton's "Learn-and-Serve" last summer was a great model.)
16. Given our presence in Madison I am not sure what those opportunities would be. While Madison is presently considered a college educated white middle class town, changing demographics are increasing the number of minorities and non-college educated individuals. The opportunity for PLATO is to try and find a way to include them in our programs with courses that relate to these individuals.
17. Having a PLATO rep serve on the boards, committees and evaluation teams for community bodies such as the public schools, police force, city management, libraries, etc.
18. I am not aware of any that would significantly change the satisfaction of its members.
19. I have already mentioned encouraging political activism through teaching. There is such power in all citizens, but especially in seniors!--life experience, time to put to good use, talent and expertise, energy and willingness to commit, the desire to accomplish good, the ability to see the far goals. And then there is the "other side"--the need to direct their energy from a calm, steady place within. Seniors have the time to do that, also. I'll wager that classes about meditation and consciousness would be popular. Also classes about bias and discrimination. Today's world requires that we engage in social issues. Nothing could be more important or accomplish better. All that PLATO has offered in the past has been good, meaningful and fulfilling for many grateful seniors. Today demands a different tack for a while.
20. I think, although PLATO uses technology well, I think in the future to keep up with and explore new ways of using technology. (Facebook?)
21. Increase membership diversity by venturing into communities currently not being served. Rather than focusing on attracting diverse audiences to our programs, go into "unserved" communities and join them.
22. Increasing the socio-economic diversity of the membership. Integrating social media into courses/learning opportunities.
23. Lower income, racially diverse, non-U people might also be interested in lifelong learning if readily available at times and places convenient for them.

24. Many of these could become the subject of a new course.
25. New retirees who are more familiar with technology - could affect types of courses PLATO offers and how we communicate with members and others. Also, PLATO needs to make itself more attractive to members of minority groups.
26. None of the above. Everybody seems to be sponsoring such "events" and "classes" and "etc." What do we really want and need? How to foment a political change. How to anticipate emerging technologies and learn to use them or ignore them. What do demographic shifts and changing norms do to our communities, for real not somebody's classroom statistics. And what can they do to us individually, and what can we do about that if we don't like it? If we do like it?
27. Offering service opportunities through United Way, Madison Metropolitan School District, etc.,
28. On site group meetings using offsite instructors and a group moderator.
29. Online streaming technology and distance-learning opportunities.
30. Partnering with other organizations that also provide services and learning and social opportunities to seniors, so that PLATO doesn't have to duplicate these events and thereby wear out their human and financial resources by offering more of the same and being able to offer opportunities to seniors that PLATO isn't doing now, ie, recreational activities and more.
31. PLATO is not very well known to the larger community. Member marketing campaign will help attract new members who will have the leadership and skills set to further PLATO's appeal. PLATO is good bargain for the thrifty pensioner.
32. Possibility of collaboration with like-minded organizations.
33. Provide additional opportunities to know more about people who are different from oneself. Provide annual membership and field trip scholarships/waivers for those in need.
34. Providing courses, lectures, events that those still working full or part time can take advantage of. This is a growing group that we seldom consider.
35. Remembering the main feature of PLATO -- participatory (ground up), the opportunities must be initiated by the members. Plato should do all that is possible to facilitate the expansion.
36. Take advantage of tapping into the various way in which people learn - provide numerous learning modes and models for people to experience.
37. Technology for communication and delivering programming is obvious. Working closely with the Continuing Studies Department--depending on financial resources as a limiting factor. Developing additional partnerships with Madison College/other area colleges, and possibly the library system and Dane Co. Senior Centers beyond what is presently done. Are there businesses and other Senior-directed organizations that might want to work with PLATO on projects from time to time? Increase our connections within the broader community,
38. Technology/social media opportunities
39. That's hard to say considering the threats to education on all fronts. Maybe PLATO's support of Global Hot Spots could be the beginning of further coordination with additional UW public learning initiatives. The UW Summer Forum was not offered in 2016. Could there be some collaboration that might strengthen both participants - PLATO and UW?
40. The changes implied by this list will provide a wealth of issues, ideas, concerns, interests upon which to build educational programming.
41. The impending retirement of the Baby Boomer generation (those born between 1946 and 1960) will have dramatic social change. Just as almost every other aspect of American life

changed as a result of the Baby Boomers moving through the life cycle, so retirement will be changed. Capturing the interest of those who have just retired or thinking of retirement will provide great opportunities.

42. The use of technology to offer courses and lectures to a greater number of members.
43. The world is changing quickly and PLATO courses are dependent on the interest of individual leaders. How does PLATO expand course offerings? How do we identify new courses that would interest PLATO members?
44. To help older citizens remain aware of changes in our modern world.
45. Under a new White House Administration many things that affect our daily activities and plans for the future: if we are to be proactive in meeting the needs of PLATO members, we need to have our leadership be aware of changes and provide forums (lectures, classes and/or special events) to explain/discuss these policy shifts.
46. Use distance learning facilities to include members who are not able to attend due to distance, physical limitations, or transportation issues.
47. With the university stressed by the economic and political realities, PLATO, with its offerings of courses, lectures and events, may be well positioned to be an alternative provider of these services.

Again looking outside of PLATO (in such areas as political changes, demographic shifts, the economy, current and emerging technologies, changing social norms/mores, changes at the UW, and so forth) what do you see as the most significant issues and factors that could present the greatest threats to PLATO's long-term success if it were to ignore them?

1. A big threat would be political pressure to adopt "the right" worldview.
2. A possible threat could be support from UW as the UW funding gets cut.
3. Although many PLATO members may feel they are being left behind because of all the areas you have listed above, particularly emerging technologies, you must continue to gather together talented people from the "younger generation" who have the ability to lead us, kicking and screaming, forward.
4. As the diversity of the U.S. population increases, PLATO must continue to reflect diversity in its courses, field trips, and meeting venues.
5. Competition form on line courses. The internet is offering so much adult education. How do we build on that capacity? The population of Madison is become more diverse. How do we engage neighbors who are different?
6. Continuing to basically do what we have done and assume that new members will want that
7. Difficulty of recruiting volunteers to be effective, knowledgeable course coordinators and committee members.
8. Economic downturn, thermonuclear war (which I've begun to worry about for the first time in decades), new interests of potential members, stale course material. BTW: All of PLATO's forms allow for only two genders - this is changing in society at large.
9. Expanding the membership without more paid help administratively which means raising membership dues. It may become necessary to start to pay course coordinators to achieve the high quality we are used to providing but may not be able to sustain with a payment system. Also a raise the price PLATO pays to rent various facilities. The board needs to assess just how much the membership is willing to pay for the services they are used to and want to have from PLATO.

10. Failing to expand topics for courses.
11. Failing to join with work with existing communities beyond what might be called the "white, college educated elites." Don't expect other communities to flock to us. They have their own unique cultures about which we know precious little.
12. Failure to understand the needs of its members as well as potential members in a data driven fashion could jeopardize the organization. The group is large enough that failure to gather and analyze data about member needs could jeopardize PLATO.
13. Fewer people may go to college (which comprises, if not all, the bulk of current membership's "common denominator") or may have the economic means or time or interest (based on experience) to participate in an organization like PLATO.
14. Funding limitations imposed by government on University Extension and its branches.
15. How long will UW continue to financially underwrite PLATO given the pressures on the UW budget? Also, there are lots of ways to learn online, without joining PLATO and attending a class.
16. I think that taking a particular view that it is our duty to address a particular wrong in society will destroy PLATO. What is important is to have safe venues where people can study and discuss issues. Those who feel sufficiently motivated to do something about a certain issue should address their concerns in a different venue, of which there are many in the Madison area. If PLATO turns political, it will destroy itself in the long run. To remain vital, PLATO should concentrate on the curriculum, technological developments, and meeting the needs of older learners. One other warning, the leadership should remain on guard against serving their own interests and needs rather than the membership as a whole.
17. I think that the greatest threat to PLATO is losing sight of our original mission and trying to expand to quickly to other areas and becoming a political threat to other existing nonprofits such as UW Extension services.
18. Lack of diversity of membership, mainly ethnic.
19. Lack of funding support for the University by the State of WI. Right now the University is very supportive of PLATO in terms of clerical support and office space.
20. Leadership development within PLATO's membership.
21. Loss of good jobs with good pensions.
22. Loss of support from the UW. Risk of becoming irrelevant if PLATO does not continue to address the demands of younger members.
23. Maybe the current PLATO demographic provides some insulation against trends that devalue education in general, but if this persists I suppose that could affect the growth in membership. But then PLATO's primary support comes from Madison. One thing that might become scarce is free classroom space if community agencies experience funding cuts. If humanitarian aid is severely decreased it could adversely affect senior citizens and their ability to participate. PLATO membership costs and transportation fees could prevent some current participants from continuing and discourage potential members from joining.
24. Not a good idea to get involved in politics as an organization. Leave that to individual members and to class discussions and lecture topics open to the public.
25. Not being willing to change to meet the desires of a younger retirees.
26. Not keeping up with technology.
27. Not keeping up with the new technologies people use to communicate, such as in class presentations, having appropriate equipment, or supporting technology requests for forums, blogs, etc.

28. PLATO has a lack of diversity in its membership. It is overwhelmingly white, extremely well educated, comfortable financially and a bit elitist. Where that is somewhat reflective of Madison, it just seems wrong. Unsure how to fix that. Part of that is that we are a group of older people. Maybe that will change as the younger Madison demographic ages.
29. PLATO needs to use technology to communicate with its members, provide learning opportunities and offer connections for its members with other organizations via partnerships and joint sponsorship of programs and events.
30. PLATO will be a liberal island isolated from the political turmoil surrounding us.
31. Problems with the UW.
32. Remaining pertinent to the moment.
33. Retirement and Investment Plans, the Affordable Care Act changes, traveling safely in the USA and in international areas.
34. Seniors economic problems, transportation problems.
35. Sticking with old ideas and old ways of presenting information about them. New? Does Trump and cabinet represent a threat or a boost to economy? To social justice? To standing of USA in the world? What can you and I do about the above? How much is a ticket to Greenland?
36. That ideas are changing and that the county no longer is only Madison, but surrounding communities also.
37. The answer to this is in the question!
38. The anti-academic attitude of the Legislature. The cuts to higher education funding in WI. The threat of cost/sharing increases to Medicare.
39. The greatest threat is emerging technologies and ways of communicating - if PLATO doesn't adapt to them we will lose/not attract younger retirees (those of us in early 60's and then next group) will have come out of having worked in a very "connected" world (Texting, Facebook, etc.) and have come to expect to continue to do so.
40. The greatest threat would be not to be able to field a number of courses with diversity of interest and topics.
41. The growing number of older adults in our country who will need to work until older ages and may need additional income even if they get to retire will have an impact on all organizations serving this age group.
42. There may be challenges as the baby boomer boom tapers off and membership starts to decline. In the meantime, need to involve more tech savvy members in program development.
43. Trumpanism.
44. UW budget/financial support of PLATO.
45. UW Extension, social media devices, climate change, ethical irresponsibility, changes in the demographics of minority populations.
46. UW financial squeeze due to political pressures to make money and do less Wisconsin Idea-type activities that don't bolster immediate bottom line.
47. We always seem to assume we can continue to grow at the present rate--yet what are the facts? We need to study the issue of growth for an organization like ours--maybe with help of experts--and make a plan. Also, as we grow our leadership, very often the same people for long stretches of time are asked to take on more responsibility. Do we need some additional paid staffing now? If not now, how do we divide responsibilities so that we do not overtax people's energy and still maintain reasonable continuity of services and long-range leadership?

48. We have become quite independent of UW services and finances. However, we rely heavily on the one paid staff member (provided through UW/DCS) and other services such as office space, copier, equipment storage, etc. We might be priced out of obtaining these services from UW. To obtain the same privately could be costly and interruptive.

What, from your perspective, is the most important thing that PLATO can do organizationally to ensure its long-term success at serving the lifelong learning needs of Madison area seniors?

1. A significant and well thought out program to recruit volunteers to be course coordinators and committee members.
2. Ask us regularly and don't put that into statistics; try programming the member interests.
3. Ask, and listen.
4. Begin to look beyond serving only the highly educated, economically well off who currently are the current membership. If this change comes to pass, then mechanisms and processes of leadership development likely will need to be put into place.
5. Bite the bullet - and get an Executive Director and/or an experienced administrative assistant. It's unrealistic to expect a growing organization to be so dependent on volunteers for so many activities.
6. Broaden the offerings that are available at sites further to the east and west of the isthmus.
7. Communicate better with the entire community, not just the elderly but their sons and daughters and maybe even grandchildren - get articles in all the local newspapers, magazines, etc. - and not just once but every few months!
8. Communicating with members, assessing their needs in a more formal way to understand the direction members are willing to go, i.e., to support the raising costs of maintaining the organization.
9. Continue its relationship and support with the UW and the UW Extension.
10. Continue to expand its membership base and engage in progressive activism.
11. Continue to find ways to involve more members in the organizational structure.
12. Continue to provide its wide variety of courses and trips that satisfy its member's needs.
13. Continue to provide the opportunities for learning for seniors using all of the resources available in the area and while that includes use of technology such as webinars, interpersonal contact is vital to the continued success of PLATO.
14. Continue to recruit members who have a skill set needed by PLATO that can be used to grow PLATO in ways that will meet the challenges before us. Anticipation and awareness of the immediate economic and political trends will provide information needed to keep PLATO on a measured and successful adoptive growth path. We need a leadership function in the organization whose duty it is to be aware of threats and opportunities and help leadership steer in positive directions.
15. Continue to survey the needs/wants of the members and/or potential members who do not see the relevance of PLATO in their world.
16. Create succession plans and mentor people who might be interested in becoming course coordinators, committee chairs and board members.
17. Create, experiment and offer new services to its members to remain relevant to their needs.
18. Deal with the issue of closed classes. This is a real turn-off for members who go to the trouble of searching course offerings, attending our open houses, etc., only to find that courses they would like to take are closed. Frustrating!

19. Deciding whether we can continue to be an all-volunteer organization.
20. Develop fresh programs and recruit good coordinators.
21. Develop more champions for its mission among UW admin officers.
22. Do a better job of orientation and follow up of new volunteers. Do routine evaluations of effectiveness of each committee and satisfaction of members.
23. Embrace change.
24. Encourage members to become involved and not rely on the same group of individuals to do the bulk of the work.
25. Encourage more people to participate in the planning and organizing of PLATO. Establish some sort of platform for input on new ideas for activities or courses. Currently, if you suggest an idea, you are then strongly made to feel you should organize it. There seems no place to present ideas without being called on to do something you might not have the time or be comfortable doing.
26. Encourage PLATO members to offer courses and participate in one of the PLATO committees or Board.
27. Facilitate close involvement of the members in the organization.
28. First think of Dane County rather than just Madison and. Continue the connection with the University.
29. Have the Board or Executive Committee work even more closely with committee chairs to assess leadership and support service needs on a yearly basis so that turnover is gradual and increased membership does not overburden organizational capabilities.
30. Hire a professional executive director
31. I think PLATO needs to aggressively advertise itself to people of retirement age to get as many younger seniors as possible involved in the organization-- to keep the org. refreshed and up to date and in place take the torch when the older members cannot. So far, PLATO has been a word-of-mouth only organization.
32. Improve and increase number of sites available for courses.
33. Include minority perspectives in course offerings.
34. Increase the number of members involved in administrative and teaching positions.
35. Keep asking and listening to what members want from PLATO and responding in a timely manner. Not just what we think would be innovative, but what they really want.
36. Keep doing what you have always done, realizing that great change is in the air. Strength and flexibility will be required. Accent the positive. This Survey is a good start. I am honored to be asked for my opinions. The Survey is thorough, posing questions I am having a hard time answering because 1) they require deep thought and 2) I don't have the answers. But this I know: Eckhart Tolle suggests that man must evolve or die, and this holds true for organizations, too. PLATO IS evolving. Its leadership has inspired trust. Keep communication open.
37. Keep on checking with the participants about their preferences.
38. Keep recruiting dedicated people willing to share their talents. 2. Create a climate within the organization that encourages efficiencies of time and effort and recognition for one's volunteerism.
39. Keeping abreast of societal changes, remaining technologically aware and current, expanding the curriculum to meet changing needs and concerns, staying away from politicizing the organization, bringing new younger people into leadership positions, finding new venues, keeping costs down, having great opportunities for socializing, will secure PLATO's future.

40. Look for ways to engage more members in the organization. Whether they actively promote PLATO in the community, help with mailings, serve on a committee or become a Board member, the experience will make them more aware of the complexity of keeping PLATO relevant and exciting.
41. Make sure that we are offering relevant learning opportunities with strong volunteer support, effective infrastructure, and do it all in a cost effective manner.
42. PLATO should actively seek members of color and those living on the south, east, and north sides of Madison.
43. PLATO sometimes seems like a federation of independent efforts with little cross promotion and coordination. Diverse offerings are a strength. Failure to articulate a consistent message is a weakness. As it grows in size, PLATO needs to have a consistent message. PLATO is also in danger of straying from its core strength by emphasizing charitable giving as a core activity when in fact it is peripheral to the core mission. This kind of mission creep can weaken organizations.
44. Retain close contact with members to insure that their needs are being met. In addition making members of ethnic minorities aware of our offerings.
45. Smaller BOD that acts and not reacts.
46. Stay volunteer led, flexible and creative.
47. Stop making nomination to the Board of Directors a popularity contest, and get rid of the Executive Committee.
48. Use professional help to expand the PLATO Fund.

What is your current status in your work with PLATO? [Check all that apply]

Value	Percent	Count
Current board member	24.07%	13
Past board member	18.52%	10
Current/past committee member	77.78%	42
Current/past course coordinator	27.78%	15
Other	5.56%	3

How many years have you been or were you involved in a leadership role with PLATO?

Value	Percent	Count
Less than 1 year	26.42%	14
1 year to less than 2 years	9.43%	5
2 years to less than 5 years	26.42%	14
5 years to less than 10 years	28.30%	15
10 years or more	9.43%	5
	Total	53