

PLATO PERSIMMON

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President's Corner: PLATO Looks Ahead

By Incoming PLATO President Frank Power



PLATO, led by three recent Presidents, Tim Otis, Patricia Becker and Mary Boyd has steered

successfully through three years of near whitewater change. In the year ahead, hopefully, PLATO will cruise calmer waters. We intend to stow and integrate these changes fully into the PLATO experience among its current and future one thousand plus members. The changes are enumerated elsewhere in this issue of *Persimmon*. For my part, the new PLATO Office within the UW Department of Continuing Studies (DCS), staffed by the able and experienced DCS staff member, Louise Fowler, and the 2015-2017 Memorandum of Agreement between PLATO and DCS will be most helpful in working through PLATO's 2015-2016 agenda. These significant DCS related achievements were cultivated and guided by the dedicated University Liaison to PLATO, Professor Barry Orton.

Two other major changes will sharply affect PLATO's future: first, PLATO has begun and will increasingly handle its financial transactions independent of DCS, and, second, PLATO will continue to improve its own quality and member engaging website. These changes mark the mature partnership between PLATO and DCS and will ease and speed PLATO's business and communication operations in this increasingly digital prevalent world. **(Continued on page 2)**

FALL COURSES Highlighted at Preview!

By Mary Boyd and Lewis Bosworth

The Fall Course Preview is scheduled for **Wednesday, September 16th**, 2015 at the Madison Senior Center, 330 West Mifflin Street, Madison from **1:30—3:00 p.m.** Our format gives members plenty of flexibility. It's a Fair-like structure with tables set up in rows on the first floor of the Senior Center, with aisles for members to stroll from table to table and meet and talk with any of the coordinators present. New coordinators will be identified so you can find and meet them easily. Committee Chairs will also be available to answer questions about upcoming events and *opportunities to volunteer or become a course coordinator*.

You can come and go anytime between 1:30 pm. and 3:00 pm. Refreshments will be served. During the afternoon we have scheduled a brief session with PLATO officers and Board members on the second floor of the Senior Center. This will give you a chance to ask questions and learn more about the structure of PLATO—its committees, its charitable arm, The PLATO Fund, *The Agora*, PLATO's literary journal, and The Arts Café which showcases members' artistic endeavors. Everyone is welcome to attend this session. We hope that new members, especially, will join us to learn more about everything PLATO has to offer. And we hope our format will ease the parking problems we have experienced in the past and give members more flexibility in using their time to learn about new and recurring courses. See you on September 16th!

President's Corner Continued:

They are the direct result of several years of devout and dogged effort, the former led by PLATO Treasurer, Tim Otis, and the latter led by Scott Kolar, now President-Elect, and Gail Gordon, Communications Committee Chair.. The incorporation of these major changes and numerous others into the Structure, By-Laws, Policies, Practices and Procedures of PLATO will be part of this year's aforementioned integration efforts. They will become the way we function, and we will be better for it. We intend also to take time this year to chart PLATO's three-year course ahead as we approach our 30th year anniversary. Guided by our Vision, Mission, and Core Value Statements, we will seek effective ways to encourage more members to embrace PLATO's unique emphasis on participatory involvement. Experts on organizational success teach that involvement leads to commitment; commitment, in turn, leads to organizational identification, and this personal identification, they say and I believe, is the key to outstanding organizational success. When PLATO began in 1987, the founders wisely realized that involving a lot of oneself in learning, teaching and socializing would produce the best personal experience and organizational success.. Hence, the "P" in PLATO still stands strong for "Participatory;" it still calls out to PLATO members for what the organizational experts term: Involvement, commitment and personal identification. Now, 1000 plus members strong, we need to be better in getting members to put more of themselves into making PLATO run and taking pride in their PLATO being the best Learning in Retirement Organization in the Midwest.

Finally, PLATO provides hundreds of opportunities for learning, teaching, socializing with interesting lifelong learners, and helping other adults climb up the educational ladder. Active participation in PLATO provides

members with three of the five activities researchers say foster brain health and longevity: learning, socialization, and identification with a worthy cause. Thus, my first message to all PLATO members and new members especially, stems from my Boston and Kennedy era upbringing: And so my fellow retirees, in the year ahead, ask not only what PLATO can do for you, ask also what you can do for PLATO.

PLATO Annual All Member Luncheon and Meeting



Welcome and Introductions

President, Mary Boyd welcomed the more than 160 members in attendance at the Nakoma Country Club and called the All Member Meeting to order. She listed several of the year's accomplishments. Among them, was the renewal of a Memorandum of Agreement with the University which describes the responsibilities of each in their on-going relationship. This agreement will extend PLATO's formal arrangement with the University through June of 2017. She introduced Barry Orton who is the faculty liaison with PLATO and who has been instrumental in working through the memorandum with PLATO as well as a number of other issues. Mary also introduced Continuing Studies Assistant Dean, Laura Ingram, who has been supportive of PLATO's mission. She worked with PLATO to hire a part-time office administrator for PLATO in the middle of 2014 and provide new, more private office space for PLATO. We took possession of our new office in December. She and Dean Russell also supported PLATO's efforts as it transitioned to more independence in managing its financial transactions. The above efforts during the past year have served to document the benefits that

the University and PLATO each receive from their continued relationship.

Election of Officers and Board Directors

Patricia Becker, chair of the nominating committee, presented the following slate:

President: Frank Power

President- Elect: Scott Kolar

Secretary: Sybil Better

Treasurer: Tim Otis

Director-at-Large: John Koch

Director-at-Large: Patricia Herrling

There were no additional nominations from the floor and the slate was elected by acclamation.

Recognitions:

Distinguished Service Awards: Past President, Patricia Becker, recognized Joan Penn and Judy Sadowsky for their many years of service to PLATO. (See accompanying article.)

Volunteers: Mary Boyd recognized the many volunteers who are essential to PLATO including course coordinators, committee members, the web services team and board members. She also emphasized the on-going need for volunteers.

Scholarship Recipients: PLATO's charitable arm, The PLATO Fund, sponsors scholarships to returning adult students. Tim Otis, Fund Development Committee chair introduced this year's recipients—Sean Kean, Billie Kelsey, and Yanli Zhu. And for the first time, PLATO donated a scholarship to the Odyssey Project, a program to help needy adults to acquire skills and credits to begin a college education. PLATO has provided over \$40,000 in scholarship aid over the past three years.

Keynote Speaker:

Dr. Elsworth Brown, Director of the Wisconsin Historical Society talked about the mission of the Society to support Wisconsin's History through its document preservation efforts, publications, museums, historic sites and staff. The State Historical Society also serves to provide support to local societies and groups in their efforts to document and preserve local history. Both at the local and state levels it provides numerous educational opportunities.

After he described a number of the state-wide facilities administered by the Society, Dr. Brown outlined efforts to improve its facilities.



The Society is undertaking a multi-million dollar plan to build and remodel facilities in Madison to house archives in improved environments to preserve precious materials and to provide increased museum space. As this will be an on-going effort, citizen support will be critical.

The afternoon ended with in-coming President, Frank Power, thanking current President Mary Boyd and outgoing Board Members Lauren Blough, Bob Blitzke and Patricia Becker for their efforts during the past year.

By Mary Boyd, PLATO Past President

PLATO Honors Former Presidents

At the annual all-member meeting and luncheon, Plato honored former Presidents, Joan Penn (President in 2000-2001) and Judy Sadowsky for their leadership and as long-time PLATO volunteers.



L-R: Mary Boyd (President), Judy Sadowsky (Honoree), Frank Power (Incoming President)

Joan Penn---Though unable to attend the luncheon, when contacted, Joan related that she and her husband, Tom, joined PLATO shortly after moving to Madison in 1997, back when

membership was 300-400. She says she joined up to six classes ranging from philosophy, novels, history, current events and science and enjoyed them all. Starting in 1999-2000, Joan took over as a coordinator for *Novels Old and New* and continued in that role through spring of 2015, when, for health reasons she had to resign. In recent years she gratefully accepted help from several co-coordinators. Joan served as President of PLATO in 2000-2001. In addition to the opportunities to use skills learned as a former teacher, Joan says that she and Tom have made many friends during their years in PLATO and wish it continued success in the years ahead. You can contact Joan to wish her well at: wtsjpenn@gmail.com

Judy Sadowsky---Like Joan, Judy is a former teacher (high school science) who joined PLATO in 2001 shortly after retiring. At the urging of fellow members she joined the curriculum committee in 2003. She became the committee chair and served as either the chair or co-chair for 7 years. By the time she left the committee in 2010, PLATO membership had doubled to over 800 members. Her time on the committee focused on serving the need for more courses, recruiting more coordinators and increasing communication. Having proven her leadership skills, Judy was elected President for 2010—2011, a three year commitment: President –elect in 2009-2010, President 2010-2011, and Past President and chair of the nominating committee in 2011-2012. By then membership had jumped to over 900. Judy resides in the village of Oregon and continues to enjoy participating in PLATO courses. She can be reached at: jsado@frontier.com

Special Events News

By Janet Cabot, Special Events Chair
 Eight years ago PLATO offered its first bus trip to a Milwaukee Repertory Theatre production. Since then members have embraced special events such as this as another way to learn, participate and engage. In our year just ended hundreds of members and guests (735 participants in all) went on one of 20 field trips, lectures or tours organized by the PLATO special events committee. Activities ranged from a guided walk at Epic’s art-filled campus and

behind the scenes visit to Olbrich Gardens to a tour of Ten Chimneys, the Wisconsin home of Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne and an End of Life Planning Workshop.

Recently two bus loads of PLATO members and friends traveled to the Milwaukee Art Museum to see the “Van Gogh to Pollock Modern Rebels” exhibit. Chief Curator Brady Roberts provided critical insights and context to the paintings in a specially-arranged private lecture beforehand. The second part of the day was a sail aboard the S/V Denis Sullivan, a re-creation of a 19th century Great Lakes schooner that serves as a floating classroom for water education programs. This was the first trip of the 2015-16 special events “season.” Join fellow members on one of the activities already on the schedule this fall:

- September 10 A lecture by WISC-TV’s Adam Schragger on consumer issues at Oakwood
- October 14 Dream Girls, Powerhouse Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory
- November 9 The Lion, Stiemke Studio, Milwaukee Repertory
- December 9 The Mousetrap, Powerhouse Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory

Also being planned for October: a lecture at the Vilas Zoo on the role of the zoo in preserving endangered species and increasing genetic diversity and a trip to historic Galena, Illinois.

Event details and dates, once finalized, are posted on platomadison.org.



Special Event Committee members Mike and Carla DiIlorio aboard the S/V Denis Sullivan.

Serving PLATO

This column recognizes and appreciates the members who are ending their terms or ending their service to PLATO. As these people end their service we hope others will step forward and volunteer. Won't you consider serving PLATO in the future? Thanks you for your valuable time serving the PLATO Membership!

Special Events

Bob Blitzke-stepping down as Chair

Course Coordinators

Special recognition goes to veteran PLATO Coordinators Helen Aarli, Joan Penn, Sue Arnost, Lois Karn and Catherine Bloomer who have devoted their time and energy to enriching the lives of fellow PLATO members and ensuring that their courses will continue by encouraging participants to assume the leadership role.

Helen Aarli – Art Museums

Lois Karn and Catherine Bloomer – The Play's the Thing

Joan Penn and Sue Arnost – Novels Old and New

Margaret Stine – Biographies West

Fall 2015 Schedule of Courses

Most fall 2015 classes begin the week of September 21st but check schedules for earlier and later start dates at the platomadison.org website under the "Courses" tab. There was a positive response to our call for fall courses on new topics. Marv Kennebeck will be sharing his expertise with genealogy resources in "Finding Your Roots." Those members who have requested explorations in the history of science have several options. Marilyn Sallee, a retired science teacher, will lead the discussion of James Burke's "The Day the Universe Changed," a PBS series that provides an overview of historical scientific breakthroughs and how they affected society. "History of Agriculture" offered by Bill Eisinger will be of special interest to many Wisconsinites, native or transplant. Stan Goldfarb, a physician, returns to coordinate "History of Medicine." Fine tuning of the universe, an argument frequently used in support of intelligent design, is the focus

of Don Reeder's "Physics and Society."

Whether you're an aspiring or an accomplished artist, you'll be welcomed at "Exploring Creativity" coordinated by Diane Hughes. The group meets at Capitol Lakes to share techniques and encourage each other's creativity. If your creative tool is the pen or PC, not only do you have the choice of the reminiscence or poetry composition classes, but you might also consider Andy Millman's "Fiction Writing" that will meet at Neighborhood House a new host location. Andy is a published author whose course will provide feedback and peer review. If you're a baby boomer two courses that will investigate the arts and events that you may have experienced directly are: Jim O'Brien's "Film Generation: the Late 60s" and Tim Otis' "1968: the Year in Which the History of the USA and the World Was Changed." "1968" will meet at Covenant Presbyterian Church on Segoe Road, another new location. Rick Orton has designed a challenging series of in-depth discussions with an impressive roster of speakers to address the topic "Racial Injustice and Inequality in Madison" at the UW South Madison Partnership on Park St. This list is just a sampling of the 46 courses you can choose from this fall thanks to the planning by our generous PLATO Coordinators.

Lauren Blough, Curriculum Committee Co-Chair

The AGORA Volume 4



Volume 4 of *The AGORA*, PLATO's literary journal of arts and ideas, is hot off the press and ready for distribution to all PLATO households in September. This compilation of the original creative work of PLATO

members includes 31 pieces of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and visual art (photography and painting) selected by juried blind review from among 98 submissions. There are pieces based on memories and experiences, others crafted with creative imagination, others expressing ideas and visions and coming from a desire to

share insights, some are light hearted, some serious. This is a volume to read through, to pick up now and then and read a few entries, to come back to over time. It is the hope of the AGORA Editorial Board that you will come to treasure this benefit of your membership in PLATO, and perhaps consider submitting an original work of your own for the next volume.

Many thanks are due to the PLATO members who submitted their work, whether selected or not. The volume is dedicated to all PLATO members whose support made this literary magazine possible, and to Professor Barry Orton, PLATO's UW Department of Continuing Studies liaison, for his tireless advocacy for PLATO and its programs, including *The AGORA*. We also thank Christina Finet of the DCS Integrated Marketing and Communications staff for graphic design, and Louise Fowler, PLATO's Administrative Assistant, for her invaluable help with all the details. Production of this volume was made possible by member dues and financial donations from individual members, including from those who attended the Fall Agora Arts Café, as well as from several community sponsors (Capital Lakes Retirement Community, Oakwood Village University Woods, Burkhalter Travel, Dayton Wood Painting, and Glass Slipper Homes LLC.)

The AGORA Volume 4 is itself the creative work of the Agora Editorial Board: Lewis Bosworth, Barbara Carson, Mary DeWolf, Susan Hoffman, Lorna Kniaz, Joan McCarthy, Aleta Murray, Phil Paulson, Fred Ross, Joanne Storlie, and Jean Wilcox.

By Patricia Becker, Managing Editor

PLATO Needs Your Help!

PLATO is a volunteer organization. We have over 1000 members, but our only paid staff is a half-time administrative assistant. Virtually everything that you enjoy about PLATO – the courses, the lectures, the trips, the publications – is available solely because of the efforts of members like yourself. And, as our membership grows, so does our need for volunteers.

Here's How You Can Get Involved

- Become a course coordinator. Share your passion for a topic or field. Contact Lauren Blough, 249-0248, laurenbl252@yahoo.com
- Join a committee
 - **Curriculum Committee:** Help make interesting courses available to other learners. Contact Lauren Blough, 249-0248, laurenbl252@yahoo.com
 - **Special Events Committee:** Help plan and organize the events you enjoy. Contact Janet Cabot, 280-1067, jbcabot52@gmail.com
 - **Communications Committee:** If you like to write, this would be a good choice for you. Contact Gail Gordon, 364-6197, gailgordon@hotmail.com
 - **Membership Committee:** Do you enjoy speaking before groups? They could make use of your skills. Contact Mary DeWolf, 318-0556, leeandme@arkansas.net
 - **The AGORA Committee:** Help to publish our literary journal. Contact Patricia Becker, 833-5799, ptbecker@wisc.edu
 - **Arts Café Committee:** Help provide opportunities for PLATO members to share their creativity through music, art, and theater. Contact Lewis Bosworth, 238-3648, lewisabosworth@gmail.com
 - **Fund Development Committee:** Are you experienced or interested in fundraising? This is the place for you. Contact Tim Otis, 233-2050, tierneyotis@gmail.com
 - **Finance Committee:** Are you knowledgeable about financial and business practices? If so, this might be the right choice for you. Contact Tim Otis, 233-2050, tierneyotis@gmail.com

- Do you have administrative skills? If so, you can provide support/back up to our administrative assistant. Contact Louise Fowler, 262-5823, email lfowler@dcs.wisc.edu
- Are you knowledgeable about computers? If so, become part of the team that maintains our website (training on the specific software is provided). Contact Scott Kolar, 886-8150, kolarsmmj@gmail.com

For more information about volunteer opportunities in PLATO, please contact PLATO President Frank Power, 285-5358, email frnpwr@aol.com.

PLATO Membership Committee

The Membership committee is a small but active group of volunteers who like reaching out to people and telling them about PLATO and all the wonderful benefits offered by PLATO. We make presentations, man booths at various venues around Madison, and pass out literature in places where seniors gather. You've seen us at the Spring and Fall previews and we're there to check you in at the luncheon. We also work to find other volunteers to coordinate courses and to join the various committees which make PLATO work so efficiently. The committee helped put together this spring's survey and we will work to interpret the results of that survey. The Membership committee is currently working at making PLATO more diverse by reaching out to the various ethnic and social groups in the Madison area who may not know who we are and what we offer. This fall, in your courses, you may be approached by a member of the committee and asked if you have ever given thought to coordinating a course, joining a committee, or volunteering to do any of the little jobs that are necessary to keep PLATO running so smoothly. When you are, I hope you will give some serious thought to helping out by giving your time and talent to

keep PLATO the wonderful organization it is. Thank you.

Mary De Wolf, Membership Chair

The PLATO Fund

The PLATO Fund is the venue for PLATO's charitable activity. For the past four years PLATO, via the Fund, has donated more than \$30,000, including \$13,200 this year alone, to disadvantaged returning adult students attending UW-Madison. This year's donation also included support for a student in the Odyssey Project, a program to assist adults in the journey out of poverty into higher education. Significantly, the total donation has grown each year. Currently, the Fund balance is some \$130,000, a figure that represents not only your generous gifts but also the investment earnings. PLATO has a formal agreement with the UW-Madison Foundation to invest and administer the Fund, assuring prudent, professional management of all donations and a guaranteed return of 4.5% annually. The role of the Foundation, however, is for purposes of administration and investment only. PLATO alone determines on an annual basis the amount to be donated and the beneficiaries thereof.

To date, donations to the PLATO Fund have been both large and small, as expected in an organization of over 1,000 members. But it is clear that the long term success of PLATO's charitable work will depend on many rather than simply a few large donors, and *this* will depend on making the donation process transparent and convenient. Toward this end, plans are to add a simple donation "check-off" option to the annual membership renewal form so that it will be possible to pay the membership fee and make a charitable donation to the PLATO Fund with a single check.

In the meantime, if you have not already done so this year, please consider making a gift to The PLATO Fund. You can do so either by sending a

check made out to The PLATO Fund to: UW Foundation Plato Fund, US Bank Lockbox, PO Box 78807, Milwaukee, WI 53278-0807, or by visiting the “Donation” tab on PLATO’s website, platomadison.org. PLATO is recognized by the IRS as a charitable organization, so your gift is tax-exempt.

With your generous help, added to that of many other PLATO members, a college education can become a reality rather than a mere dream for a number of deserving returning and beginning adult students. Your gift, large or small, brings that reality closer.

Prepared by Fred Ross, at the request of the Fund Development Committee



Tim Otis reporting on PLATO Fund Scholarship recipients at the Annual Luncheon.

2015 Member Survey

Thank you to everybody who participated in the 2015 Member Survey. A total of 439 members responded to the survey. That is a participation rate of 43%! That will help us to continue to provide the activities you want and that will keep PLATO strong and growing.

Scott Kolar and Mary De Wolf

PLATO’S New Web Site – *Better Information at Lower Cost*

Plato’s transition from a static web page hosted by UW to a beautiful and constantly changing website has taken several years. Now the efforts are really starting to pay off as the site

keeps members better informed while resulting in cost savings to Plato.

Two years ago Plato spent \$3,274 on printing and distributing the annual member directory and membership cards. Because member information changes constantly, the directory was out of date as soon as it was printed. Members now have access to an online directory that is always up-to-date and there are no costs to Plato.

The costs of printing Plato membership cards for access to the UW library network have been eliminated by providing Memorial Library with current Plato member information for the issuance of UW library cards. UW library access is one of the big benefits of Plato membership.

Two years ago the annual cost of the Persimmon newsletter was \$3,129. Now it is less than \$700. Instead of getting Plato news just a few times a year, members get weekly event and activity emails and have access to current information on the website.

The website makes it easy to have more trip options and has simplified the registration process. This is a benefit to members, but the increased use of credit cards has resulted in substantially higher credit card costs. Credit card fees vary quite a bit between card issuers. A transaction on an American Express card costs Plato twice as much as on a Visa card. If you have a choice, we ask that you not use your American Express card to pay for Plato registrations.

Plato’s beautiful website was created and is maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers who are constantly updating it with photos and information. These efforts are keeping members better informed and helping reduce Plato’s operating costs.

By Gail Gordon, Communications Chair

From the Past President: A Year in Review

By Mary Boyd



First of all, I want to thank the PLATO membership for the opportunity to serve this past year.

When we are in the moment of any activity or enterprise and close to the action, it often feels like we are moving ever so slowly, with some steps forward and a few backward. We wonder if goals will ever be achieved. However, when I got to the end of this PLATO year, I was impressed (and I hope the membership will be as well) by how far PLATO has come and with everything that was accomplished along the way during the 2014-2015 PLATO Year. None of this work or these achievements would have been realized without the leadership provided by the PLATO Board of Directors, our Committee Chairs and members, our Course Coordinators and our Office Manager, Louise Fowler, and University Liaison, Professor Barry Orton. What follows is a review of some of the efforts and achievements of the Board and the Committees to support Senior Learning Opportunities for PLATO in the past year.

Restructured Board Meetings and Implementation of an Executive Committee: To Better use the time allotted for meetings, The Board instituted a number of changes:

- An Executive Committee was formed made up of the five officers (President, Past President, President Elect, Treasurer and Secretary) to manage the day-to-day details of running the organization. They meet once a month prior to Board meetings.
- Board Members receive written Committee reports in advance rather than give oral reports at the meeting. Board time focuses on requests for policy change or Board support.
- A large portion of time at Board Meetings is set aside to address Long-Term Planning for the Organization.

This effort was begun at our December meeting.

1. Long term planning topics for this past year focused on Issues Related to Membership Growth and the need to increase the number of volunteers to manage the organization: Course Coordinators, Committee Members, Office support, and Website support. A plan to solicit more volunteers was developed and you will continue to be asked to get involved as a volunteer throughout the coming year. Some of you have already stepped forward.
2. A second focus of our long term planning effort is to increase the diversity of the membership in PLATO. A committee has been formed to start a discussion and planning effort which you will hear more about in the coming months. This is expected to be a long-term effort.
3. Other topics yet to be discussed in depth include collaboration with other senior groups and increased use of our website to support a variety of senior learning opportunities. I am sure this list will be expanded in the coming year.



Transition party for outgoing and incoming Board members.

Communications

Our Website (www.platomadison.org)

No organization can successfully operate without a quality system for timely communication. You may have noticed more electronic communication than ever before with email and our website as our primary delivery systems. Although the basics of our website

were up and running by the end of last year, this year found the website committee making adjustments, adding to the site and training people to update it. By the end of June 2015, the committee has organized a system to share the workload so that items can be posted in a timely manner. If you want to know what is going on at any given time with PLATO, this is the place to go.

Email

In addition to our website, most communication is accomplished via email, including the Persimmon and our Course Preview information. Of course if you lack internet capability or ask for a paper copy it will be provided. Every week, usually on Tuesday, there are weekly announcements which provide updated course or lecture information, trip updates and opportunities available through the University. By increasing our efforts to go paperless we saved a number of trees and several thousand dollars in printing and mailing costs this past year alone.

Membership

By the end of May, membership stood at 1045. While this was similar to last year's total, many of the members are new to PLATO, thus requiring on-going efforts for orientation and efforts to make these new members feel welcome at all of our courses and events.

All-Member Survey

To learn more about what our members are thinking and how we can use our resources of time and finances to better serve them, PLATO conducted an all-member survey on our website through the end of June. Paper copies were sent to those without email. Information from that survey will guide planning for the coming year.

Curriculum

Courses

With 50 courses available last fall and 40 in the spring, and 10+ during the shorter winter and summer sessions, PLATO offered over 100 opportunities for extended learning in class settings. As we move into the next year, the challenge will be to locate more venues that meet course needs as well as attract more course

coordinators and volunteers to help our Curriculum Committee organize the course offerings.

Special Events

Special Events had its busiest year ever sponsoring 16 trips to theaters and points of interest as well as 10 lectures. In addition, the committee sponsored 4 events which combined a local tour or event with a lecture -- to the new downtown Madison Library, Olbrich Gardens, MATC's gourmet restaurant and Wisconsin Energy Institute. Special Events also sponsored refreshments at our Course Previews, helped to locate a venue for the annual luncheon and this year, for the first time, our chair, Bob Blitzke, organized a kaffeeklatsche on the union terrace during June to provide a relaxed social opportunity for interested members.

Thanks Bob!

A Big Thank You to Bob Blitzke for chairing this committee during the past two years. Bob is stepping down as chair but will continue to lead the field trip sub-committee. Welcome Janet Cabot as the committee's new chairperson.

Agora Committee

Thanks to chairperson, Patricia Becker, and volunteer members, the Agora Literary Journal Editorial Board was reconvened and a fourth edition of the Agora is currently being published and will be available in September 2015. All submissions are the work of PLATO members and highlight the talent that exists among our membership. With some financial support from the Board, the editorial board raised additional funds to support this effort and PLATO's Arts Café committee held a fund raiser for the Agora as well. Thank you to everyone who contributed time, energy, and funding to this project.

Fund Development

PLATO's charitable arm, The PLATO Fund, donated \$12,000 toward three scholarships to needy returning adult students as well as a scholarship to a student in the Odyssey Program (which prepares disadvantaged students for college level work and earning college credit.) Thank you to everyone who donated this past year. Donations are accepted throughout

the year on the Plato website (www.platomadison.org) and are tax deductible.

Senior Learning: A Collaboration between PLATO and the University's Continuing Studies Program

Since its initial organization in 1986-1987, PLATO and the University have operated under a memorandum of agreement which outlines the working relationship and financial responsibilities of each. This is reviewed and renewed every two years and our most recent agreement, negotiated this past spring went into effect on July 1 of 2015 and will extend through June of 2017. This agreement highlights the value PLATO finds in having access to staff, facilities and the libraries at the University and the value the University finds in collaborating with a Senior Learning group like PLATO. Thank you to The PLATO Executive Committee, Barry Orton, faculty liaison to PLATO, Assistant Dean Laura Ingram, and Dean Jeffrey Russell for their efforts and support for sustaining this on-going collaboration.

Other Collaborative Efforts:

During 2014-2015, PLATO continued to financially collaborate with the University and the Alumni Association to sponsor the Global Hot Spots Lectures held 5 times during the year.

PLATO co-sponsored a workshop with the Continuing Studies Department to help our members register as Senior Guest Auditors for courses at the University.

The University's Continuing Studies staff attended PLATO's Spring Course Preview Event to provide information and sign up assistance for short term on-line courses, called MOOCs, offered for the first time at the University and available to our membership.

New Office Staff and Facility:

In answer to a PLATO request for a private office area big enough for small group collaboration, the University remodeled an area on the 7th Floor of 21 North Park Street and our office manager, Louise Fowler, moved in during December of 2014. This office "with a door"

was furnished by the University and allows for private conversations and meetings with two or three people. This has been a HUGE improvement in helping PLATO manage its day to day activities.

Welcome Frank

As I end my year as President, I am confident that PLATO is in good hands with in-coming President, Frank Power, former Curriculum Committee member and moderator of several past Preview Events. Frank has also served ably on the Executive Committee. As PLATO continues to grow and changes take place Frank will be there to remind us of the Vision and Mission and Core Values of our PLATO charter to support Senior Learning Opportunities. As I did, Frank will have a wonderful Leadership Team to work with him.

