

# PLATO PERSIMMON

21 N Park St, 7th Floor, Madison, WI 53715-1218 • 608-262-5823 • plato-slp@dcs.wisc.edu • www.PLATOmadison.org

Volume XXX Number 1

January/February 2017

## PLATO Spring Courses Highlighted at the Preview! By Nancy Schultz



It is that time again! On Wednesday, **February 15th, from 1:30 - 3:00pm**, we will meet **at the Madison Senior Center, 330 West Mifflin Street** to learn of the exciting current or continuing courses that will be available to us as PLATO members. Again we will use the OPEN HOUSE FORMAT which has been so successful the past couple of years. Come anytime on Wednesday during the afternoon. You will be invited to enter the Senior Center, pick up a folder with registration information, and then freely move from table to table talking with the coordinators about those courses which are of most interest. At the present time we have over 40 courses, so you will not have difficulty finding one or more that will

pique your interest. And while you are considering what courses you might want to take, there is the hospitality table with delicious goodies!



So we suggest you find a chair (located near the hospitality table), something to eat and drink, and talk with other PLATO members about what courses they have particularly enjoyed. And then go sign up for those courses you find interesting.

The various PLATO committees will also be represented. These groups are always in need of volunteers, so you will have an opportunity to learn more about them. The committees are: Communication, Curriculum, Finance, Fund Development, Membership, Special Events, and Technology. The special/ad hoc committees are: Agora Editorial Board and Diversity Committee.

There is also the annual meeting planning committee and the nominating committee.

For those of you who want to learn more about PLATO, a **short question and answer session will be held on the second floor of the Senior Center at approximately 2:15pm**. This is a time when new and continuing members may learn more about the PLATO committees, issues and future plans. Please join us for the PLATO preview and, if you wish, bring a friend.

**PLATO's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary News** by Frank Power, Co-Chair, Anniversary Committee



The plans for the celebration of PLATO's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary are underway. There will be two main events: **the Annual Meeting, which will be held on Wednesday, May 17, 2017, and the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration which is scheduled for Wednesday, October 18,**

**2017.** Both events will be at a great new site: the popular scenic Lussier Family Heritage Center, 3101 Lake Farm Rd., Madison, WI, 53711. Both will be held in the mid-afternoon to late afternoon and early evening hours; light fare and liquid refreshment will be included in a very modest fee. The well-known and passionate Professor Patty Loew will be the speaker at the Annual Meeting. Don't miss her.

Mark your calendars for both events and plan to celebrate PLATO's 30 years of success. Look for further 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary news on the website and in the weekly announcements. The members of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee: co-chair Aleta Murray, Janet Cabot, Suzy Griffiths, JoAnne Savoy, and Don Reeder are at your service.

### **President's Corner: Keeping Engaged**



By PLATO President Scott Kolar  
As the Frank Loesser song goes, "Baby, It's Cold Outside". As I write this Madison is suffering its first

cold snap of the winter with subzero temperatures. But PLATO is providing you with over 40 Spring Semester courses along with field trips and lectures to keep your brain sizzling until the outside temperatures match.

The big event of this year is PLATO's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The small group of less than 30 that got together in 1997 has grown to a vibrant organization of over 1100 members providing a variety of enriching activities. See an update on the anniversary planning from Past-President Frank Power on page 1.

The next volume of PLATO's arts journal, *The Agora*, will be published in 2017. Congratulations are again in order to Agora managing editor Patricia Becker who received a second grant of \$750, this time from the Dane County Arts Commission. Even with both grants not all costs are covered, so please make a contribution to help get the 2017 Agora published.

In 2010 PLATO went through a strategic planning process. The resulting [strategic action plan](http://platomadison.org/Organizational-Documents) (<http://platomadison.org/Organizational-Documents>) outlined goals for managing PLATO's growth for the next 5 years. The good news is

that we accomplished almost all the goals outlined in the plan within 18 months. Since then we have been doing fine. But our membership has steadily grown to over 1100 and could reach 1200 this year. Our growth gives us the ability to provide members with more services. However, increased size has also increased the stresses of providing those services. To provide a guide for managing our growth for the next 5 years, the Board of Directors has embarked on another Strategic Action Plan. To help us develop the plan we have retained the services of [Russell Consulting, Inc](http://russellconsultinginc.com/) (<http://russellconsultinginc.com/>). The firm consists of the husband and wife consulting team of Jeff and Linda Russell. Besides providing strategic planning businesses and UW entities, they are the same folks PLATO used for our last strategic plan.

To develop the plan we need the assistance and participation of all PLATO members. We need to get your views on the future of PLATO. We will start collecting your views with a series of surveys. I know that we just completed our annual member survey, but these surveys will focus on how you view the future development of PLATO. It is

important that you participate so that we can shape PLATO's future to meet your expectations. There will be three surveys:

- All member
- Course Coordinators
- BOD and committee members

As you can see some people will be asked to complete more than one survey. I ask that you complete all surveys sent to you. **The data we collect will be very important in defining our goals.** In addition to the surveys we will be conducting focus groups and facilitated planning sessions. We expect to have everything wrapped up and present our Strategic Action Plan by May.

**Social Opportunities in PLATO** by Frank Power, Chair, Special Events Social Committee



Providing social opportunities is one of the four principal elements in PLATO's mission, the others being learning, teaching and charity. We are all social animals and many PLATO members live alone. Aging research highlights the

significant benefits of socialization.

The principle lesson we have learned over recent years regarding social opportunities in PLATO is that they work better when they are adjunctive, that is when they are secondary and accompany courses, trips, lectures and meetings. PLATO members, as such, don't relish socialization for its own sake. The coffee klatches on the Union Terrace begun by Bob Blitzke and continued by Sharon Scratish are the happy exception.

Thus, to this end, the curriculum committee rightly provides each coordinator with an information sheet on fostering socialization adjunctive to his or her course. We encourage all coordinators to promote in 2017 some activities related to their courses that support the socialization mission element of PLATO.

We thank the Special Events Committee for continuing to lead PLATO in fostering socialization in all its activities. We urge all the other committee leaders in PLATO in 2017 to consider improving the social opportunities of PLATO members serving on their committees. Opportunity to

meet interesting people is an important reason why members join and continue membership in PLATO. Let's all make 2017, PLATO's 30<sup>th</sup> year, its best ever in providing social opportunities for its growing membership.

**PLATO Membership** by Mary De Wolf, Chair



Members enjoying classes and fellowship

The PLATO survey was closed on October 1<sup>st</sup> and I would like to thank all of you who participated this year. There were 313 of you who took the time to complete the survey, and I thought you would like to know how your fellow members responded. The majority of the respondents have been in PLATO for 2 to 5 years, and 75% of them attended a course in the last year. And most of them attended two or more courses. With regard to the courses, the topic and the course coordinator were the reasons why most people chose a particular course. And almost 75% of you attended most of the weekly sessions.

In addition to the courses over half of those responding had attended a PLATO special event, bus trip, tour or

lecture. And over 80% of you found the PLATO website useful. One hundred and eleven people took the time to express their opinion on what we should add or change to improve the PLATO experience. I am glad to report that a good many of you said PLATO was perfect as is. We were pleased with that. For those of you who offered suggestions those suggestions will be considered as well.

The survey report was presented to the PLATO board and to the Committee chairpersons. They will use the results to plan future courses and special events, and to help plan the direction of PLATO for the coming years. The Membership Committee would like to thank you again for your time and your effort to make PLATO the great organization it is.

### Spring 2017 Courses



The PLATO Curriculum Committee has been busy lining up interesting and informative courses for Spring. Over 40 courses are planned for Spring. These

include some of your favorites from the past plus new additions. We are also offering a new downtown course location, Wisconsin Historical Museum.

The new course offerings include:

*Alexander Technique: The Intelligent Use of Movement In Search of Self.* Debby Thomas will coordinate this eight-week course that is designed to acquaint participants with the tension-reducing strategies of Alexander Technique.

*Greater Madison's Diverse Populations: Community Interest, Involvement, and Obligations.* Lewis Bosworth will lead this course. By hearing what community leaders are doing to help the families and youth of minority groups in greater Madison, participants will study "hands-on" models.

*Complementary and Alternative Medicine Applied to Healthy Aging.* As an occupational therapist and psychologist, Frank Stein has explored these topics through teaching and research, and he will coordinate this new course.

*Wisconsin Maritime History.* Hank Whipple will coordinate this course that will explore the maritime history of Wisconsin featuring lumbering, navigation, and the coast guard.

### Spring Preview

Plan to attend the **Spring Preview at the Madison Senior Center, 330 West Mifflin Street on Feb. 15.** Stop in any time from 1:30 – 3 p.m. to talk with coordinators. Escape the wintry weather; come inside for some fellowship, and decide which course(s) you would like to attend.

### Propose a New Course

The Curriculum Committee is always looking for new course ideas for our members. If you are interested in coordinating a course next summer, submit the Course Proposal form (found on the PLATO website). These proposals are due March 15. Or propose a new Fall course; those proposals are due by June 1.

Questions about courses or the Curriculum Committee, contact Kathy Brown (co-chair). Her email address is: [kathyft@charter.net](mailto:kathyft@charter.net)



## The Agora by Patricia Becker



The fifth volume of *The Agora*, PLATO's journal of arts, literature, and ideas, is in the making, to be published in the summer of 2017. Submissions are due by February 1<sup>st</sup> – submission materials are on the website: [platomadison.org/Publications/TheAgora](http://platomadison.org/Publications/TheAgora).

An Arts Café to celebrate the writers and artists who contributed to the first four volumes was held on October 14<sup>th</sup>. A number of authors read from their work and visual artists spoke to their artwork, followed by a general sharing of ideas during a social hour. The works of all who contributed to the first four volumes can be seen on the PLATO website (see above).

The contribution of *The Agora* to the Madison and broader Dane County cultural scene was recently confirmed by our success in obtaining external funds to help offset the costs of publishing Volume 5. After review of our applications, The Madison Arts Commission of the Wisconsin Arts Board granted us \$3000, and the Dane Arts Council of the Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission granted us \$750.

We are most thankful to these organizations for their support.

But - more funding is needed to cover the total costs of Volume 5. To this end we will be sponsoring a fundraising Arts Café in the spring. In the meantime, we invite PLATO members to donate in support of this endeavor with a check made out to PLATO, 'The Agora' on the subject line, sent to Louise Fowler at 21 N. Park Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Madison WI 53715-1218.

A major goal of *The Agora* is to inspire creativity among PLATO members. We anticipate that Volume 5 will confirm that we are meeting that goal.

Questions? Call Managing Editor Patricia Becker at (608)833-5799, or email [ptbecker@wisc.edu](mailto:ptbecker@wisc.edu).

## Special Events 2017 by Carla DiIoria, Chair



*Setting:* Private Bank Theater, Chicago, IL  
*Time:* December 7, 2016, 1 pm  
*Actors:* 110 PLATO members  
*Title:* HAMILTON!  
Our seats in the mezzanine section provided excellent

viewing of the theatrical phenomenon of this decade, Lin-Manuel Miranda's genius accomplishment, Hamilton. Brought to those of us lucky enough to take part by PLATO's resident maestro of theatrical field trips, Bob Blitzke.

If you regularly look at PLATO's website or get mailings about upcoming PLATO events you know just how busy our committee has been and will be in the coming months. We have something for just about everyone and we hope you all avail yourselves of at least one event in the coming year.

Our subcommittees—Field Trips, Lectures, Local Tours and Social Events—actively look for and ask for ideas about new speakers, places to visit and opportunities for anyone interested to have lunch or coffee together with other members. **Your input is valuable to us and we always carefully consider suggestions.**

We also value your participation in our committee. As we add more field trips to out of town plays, more explorations of interesting locations in town, invitations to speakers we haven't heard from before we need people to carry these events through. With PLATO's continuing growth

in membership it becomes ever more important for you to take part in our all-volunteer organization. If some of you have already signed up to volunteer for Special Events but haven't heard from me, I apologize. I haven't received the information you may have put on the sign-up sheets this past October. I invite you to contact me directly. We welcome your presence and talents.

Carla DiIorio, chair  
[carlad@tds.net](mailto:carlad@tds.net) 608-257-9164

**Treasurer's Report: Fiscal Year 2015-16 Summary of Financial Activities and Issues going Forward** by Tim Otis, Chair



**Summary of Financial Activities:** During the fiscal year 2015-16 (July 1, 2015-June 30,2016) the PLATO membership grew to almost 1100. \$62,790 in dues was collected, \$25,116 of which was distributed to UW/DCS to support our administrative functions. Special Events (trips & local events) s had \$46,924 of revenue, and expenses of \$40,678. The rest of the committees,

PLATO administration, and special initiatives accounted for \$12,029 of revenue, and combined expenses of \$25,462. This resulted in a year end surplus of \$15,243, a testament to the careful use of resources by our committees.

As of June 30, 2016 PLATO'S unrestricted fund balance was \$53,804. These funds provide an adequate and healthy reserve to offset any unanticipated increases in costs or decrease in revenues.

A much more detailed presentation of PLATO'S finances is available on our website by clicking on the "About Plato" button, then clicking on the "Board of Directors" link, and then choosing "Organizational Documents". PLATO makes every effort to have our most current financial information available on the website.

**Issues Going Forward:** PLATO membership continues to increase. It is anticipated that during this fiscal year we will exceed 1200 members. PLATO continues to offer more and a wider variety of courses, trips, lectures, etc. All of this creates a greater strain on our volunteer resources and the administrative infrastructure to support our activities.

To address these and other related issues additional initiatives are being implemented.

\*PLATO has developed a contract with N4N (Numbers for Nonprofits) to do our bookkeeping. Anticipated cost/year: \$3500.

\*PLATO is undertaking a major strategic planning effort to address how we function going forward. This effort is timely as PLATO, while very healthy, needs to have a plan to guide our growth over the next few years: Anticipated one time cost for this year: \$10,000.

PLATO has increasing needs to invest in technology to support our education efforts, our website and billing systems, and our communication and membership functions. Costs associated with these efforts will likely include hardware, software, and personnel costs. The actual expenditures will be phased in over time, and will be better informed once the Strategic Plan has been finalized.

\*While much of the work that supports PLATO comes from the invaluable contributions of our member volunteers, we benefit greatly from the administrative

support provided by UW/DCS, especially by the Office Operations Coordinator; Louise Fowler. We are already aware that the demands on her time exceed the hours she is contracted for. By the end of the year PLATO will have negotiated a new MOA with UW/DCS. As part of that we anticipate contracting for a significant increase in hours for this position. Anticipated cost/year going forward: \$10,000-\$12,000.

While there is significant financial information available on the PLATO Website, I am always willing to answer any questions you may have about how PLATO'S Finances are managed: Please contact me at Tim Otis, Treasurer: [tierneyotis@gmail.com](mailto:tierneyotis@gmail.com) 608-233-1050

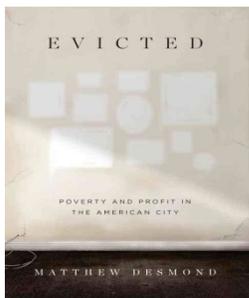
**The PLATO Diversity Committee: 2016-2017**

by Frank Power Chair, Diversity Committee

In 2016 the PLATO Board launched the Diversity Committee to help PLATO address the complex challenge of becoming an organization that genuinely is, and is perceived to be, open and welcoming to all members of the culturally diverse communities of greater Madison who also

seek opportunity to learn and teach in retirement.

The committee at its first meeting in June decided to undertake as its first member education effort, "The PLATO Big Read Project" which was to be a collaborative endeavor with The Madison Public Library and the UW's 2016 Go Big Read Program featuring the best-selling book, "*Evicted*." Through committee member, and PLATO coordinator, Rick Orton, the committee obtained and distributed 50 free copies of *Evicted* at its project launch at the Fall Preview. Members were encouraged to participate in Go Big Read events in Madison and at their local library after reading the book. The author Mathew Desmond, who did his research for the book at UW Madison, convincingly argues that eviction is a major cause of homelessness in American cities including Milwaukee and Madison.



The PLATO Big Read Project concluded with a

successful event at the downtown public library on November 16<sup>th</sup>. The event featured a panel including Sheila Storlie from the UW Go Big Read Program, Kylee Stoor, the lead community librarian for the Madison Public Library and Doug Erickson from the Wisconsin State Journal. Mr. Erickson was one of the two journalists who wrote the series of articles in the WSJ on homelessness in Madison. Hearing Mr. Erickson was a PLATO course in itself.

In early 2017, we the members of the Diversity Committee will meet to develop its plans to continue addressing the challenge the PLATO Board has set for educating ourselves and our membership regarding the culturally diverse communities of great Madison and progressing to eventually becoming a culturally diverse organization. To this end we recommend members participate in the Curriculum Committee's two diversity related spring 2017 courses: one by coordinator Rick Orton, and the other by coordinator, Lewis Bosworth. We also urge members to go on one or more upcoming diversity-themed theater trips planned by Special Events Committee member, Bob

Blitzke. Finally, plan to attend the Native American themed talk by Patty Loew at PLATO's Annual Meeting in May.

## **PLATO Fund Development News**

By Tim Otis Fund Development  
Committee Chair

### **A Short History:**

In 2011 The PLATO Board voted to add a charitable giving arm to the mission of PLATO, with a particular emphasis on supporting access to education opportunities for low-income persons. Prior to that PLATO had been making occasional gifts to the Returning Adult Student Program at UW Madison. In 2012 PLATO established the PLATO Education Fund with the UW Foundation to manage donations to and distributions from The FUND. The Fund received an initial contribution of \$80,000 from the PLATO general reserves to provide a base for the charitable giving initiatives. The Fund Development Committee was established to oversee and coordinate fund raising efforts by PLATO.

### **Fund Raising, Distributions, & Fund Growth Over the Past 5 Years:**

Since 2012 \$66,000 (more than \$16,000 this year) has been raised from the generous contributions of PLATO members. During that same time period approximately \$58,000 has been distributed through scholarships and other educational initiatives. During the first three years of the Fund approximately 60 members contributed each year. During the last two years that number has increased significantly: 115 in 2015 and more than 100 in 2016 (This # will be higher because we don't have final 2016 #s yet.) The value of the PLATO Education Fund has grown over the past five years. As of November 30, 2016 The Fund is valued at just over \$140,000. It is our plan to increase our distributions each year to at least match donations plus the growth in Fund value.

### **Current Initiatives Supported by Donations to the PLATO Education Fund:**

Currently PLATO provides 3 scholarships, for a total of \$9,000, to the Returning Adult Student Initiative at UW Madison. These

scholarships support low income students, often single parents, in pursuing a degree at UW Madison.

PLATO, starting in 2015, provides an annual \$4,200 scholarship to the Odyssey Project, which provides support for low income adults in pursuing an advanced degree.

This year PLATO has expanded its support for supporting educational initiatives by funding youth oriented education programs at Lussier Community Education Center and The Boys and Girls Club of Dane County. \$2000 was awarded to each of these organizations.

### **Going Forward:**

We have ambitious goals over the next few years.

- We hope to increase the amount we give to support access to educational opportunities from the current \$17,200/year to at least \$30,000/year.
- We are looking to increasing the number and types of organizations and initiatives that we support that make a difference in promoting educational opportunities for low-income persons. (If you have ideas

about projects we might support, please let us know.)

- We hope to see an increase in PLATO members who donate to The Fund from 100+ to over 200.

Remember, the amount you give is not nearly as important as your willingness to be a part of the PLATO charitable giving initiative.

**Questions? More**

**Information?** If you have questions about the PLATO Education Fund or would like more information please contact me. Tim Otis:  
[tierneyotis@gmail.com](mailto:tierneyotis@gmail.com) 608-233-1050

**Course Proposal Deadlines  
Reminder**

**Summer 2017 course proposals are due March 15.** New Fall 2017 course proposals are due by June 1.

Course Proposal forms are available online at:

<http://www.platomadison.org/propose>