

PLATO BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
Friday, April 18, 2014 - 9:30 a.m.
Madison Public Library-Central, 201 W. Mifflin St. Madison, WI

Present: Patricia Becker - Chair, Greg Bell, Sybil Better, Bob Blitzke, Lauren Blough, Mary Boyd, Mary DeWolf, Aleta Murray, Scott Kolar, Tim Otis, Frank Power, Don Reeder
DCS: Barry Orton
Guest: Gail Gordon

Attachments: PLATO Statement of Revenue and Expense by Cost Center July 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014; PLATO Balance Sheet March 31, 2014; PLATO Membership and Financial Management System Needs; Estimated Cost of Proposed PLATO Membership and Financial Management System; PLATO Membership and Financial Management System Implementation Timeline; Wild Apricot Information Sheet

- I. CALL TO ORDER** – Patricia Becker called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. and welcomed Gail Gordon.
- II. MINUTES** – Mary Boyd made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2014 Board Meeting and Don Reeder seconded it. The motion was passed unanimously.
- III. TREASURER’S REPORT** – Tim Otis
 - A. Tim Otis discussed two handouts – 1) the statement of revenue and expense and 2) the balance sheet – noting that he and Gail Gordon have revised the PLATO financial reporting to provide transparency. On the first form the committees, bus trips, administration and other initiatives are represented as “cost centers” on the horizontal axis while revenues and expenses are arranged vertically. With one quarter to go in the fiscal year, revenues total \$92,597.00 and expenses total \$87,648.00. Revenues will be minimal during last quarter but we’re in good financial shape considering this year’s expenses for new initiatives such as the PLATO website development.
 - B. The balance sheet represents a switch to accrual accounting that tracks transactions in the same reporting period in which they occur. This method more effectively matches revenues and expenses as opposed to cash accounting which acknowledges transactions only when cash is exchanged thus spreading some payments made or received beyond the fiscal year in which they occurred. It is hoped that this procedure will give Committee Chairs a better sense of where their budget is being spent. Currently expenditures are grouped in general categories and reported quarterly by DCS, but in the future we hope to get copies of specific expenses as they occur for real time accounting. As the changes are realized the PLATO financial statements will be revised to reflect the updated information. The improved financial statements were appreciated by Board members. Bob Blitzke was commended for the great job he does managing the finances for the bus trips. The PLATO Fund is accruing money as the

investments are doing well but there are concerns about maintaining a sufficient level of contributions.

- C. There was a suggestion that credit card fees (of 2.5% per transaction) might be offset by charging members who make payments via credit cards. Tim Otis said although it is usually considered a cost of doing business, the issue could be discussed at a future Budget meeting. There was a question about the \$2,202.00 expenditure labeled “DCS Central Services” on the statement of revenues and expenses. It represents the 3% overhead charged by UW to DCS on all monetary transactions that are processed by the UW accounting system. DCS in turn passes on to us the charges that relate to PLATO activities. Mary Boyd pointed out that some payments cost PLATO a 2.5% credit card fee plus the 3% UW fee.
- D. Tim Otis will present a tentative Budget proposal at the May meeting.

IV. PRESIDENT’S REPORT – Patricia Becker

- A. Patricia Becker said the invitation to the May 21st Annual Luncheon was mailed to PLATO members. The PLATO sponsored scholarships have been awarded to four recipients who were also invited to the Annual Luncheon. Marv Beatty and Fred Ross are the honorees and Wendy will be given a special gift for her years of service to PLATO. At the forum preceding the Luncheon, Tim Otis will make a presentation for members on “How we spend your money.” He will arrange to have the invitation with details sent by special email and included in the Weekly Announcements.
- B. Patricia Becker received an email message from a member couple who identified spam they received as coming from one of the Board members and asked that email addresses be shared on a “need-to-know” basis and not be published in the PLATO directory. It was noted that if someone subscribes to LinkedIn, they have the choice of sending an invitation to people in their address book. This is probably what happened in this case. It is a challenge to keep contact information private when we’re trying to effectively communicate with 1,000 + members. Gail Gordon said the *Wild Apricot* software (see Section VI. C. below) does provide means of restricted communication that will be an asset for PLATO members.
- C. The Social Opportunities Task Force will investigate possibilities for an end-of-fiscal – year get together sometime after the June Board meeting.

V. DCS REPORT – Barry Orton and Mary Boyd

Barry Orton and Mary Boyd reported that the search for the administrative assistant to replace Wendy Kerr was going well. There were 15 applicants. None were PLATO members but all had good skills and work experience. Four of the five candidates have been interviewed and the last appointment is scheduled after this Board meeting. The person selected has to be interviewed by the Dean, but once the hiring process is started, the new employee could start in about three weeks. Although the candidate will probably

catch on quickly, training will involve introduction to periodic procedures that occur throughout the year.

VI. TASK FORCE ON WEB SOFTWARE – Communication Committee

- A. Greg Bell sent four attachments presenting details of the proposed Membership and Financial Management System, *Wild Apricot*. They cover PLATO's performance needs, program implementation costs, the anticipated timeline and a promotional flyer noting the features of the software. Greg noted that the PLATO website launched on December 1, 2013 was Phase 1 of the Task Force's drive to improve management of PLATO's increasingly complicated organizational processes. Scott Kolar has devoted an enormous amount of time to investigating, testing and rolling out the website as well as searching for enhancements to make PLATO operate more efficiently as growth and complexity challenge the overwhelmed structures in place now. Scott has been helped by members of the Task Force including Tim Otis, Gail Gordon and Greg Bell. Catherine Masi's programming background has also been an asset to the group.
- B. Scott Kolar introduced the software and noted that "with more than 6,500 paid customers, *Wild Apricot* is the #1 membership management system on the market according to Capterra..." <http://www.wildapricot.com/> Their online help is responsive and reliable. The company extended the 30-day free trial for another 30 days without cost. Scott organized his presentation in 3 sections: 1) User experience, 2) Back office, and 3) Financial management. He demonstrated the processes involved in membership and event registration. Users go to an online form, fill it out and select a payment option. Credit transactions go through PayPal. The PLATO database is immediately updated and payments/registrations are confirmed via email or generated for mailing. To process checks received in the mail, the member's record is accessed in the database and the payment is recorded by passing the check through a scanner which transmits the data to PLATO's bank. The check can then be destroyed. Updates occur in real time which supports the accrual accounting referred to in Tim Otis' report (Section III above). There are several other features including: the option to generate membership renewal notices based on member anniversary dates or on an annual basis; recognition of members (by email address) and events that pre-fills forms with static data; access to payment histories showing amounts paid and owed; integration of PLATO calendar events with the registration system, including free lectures; authorized users can login from home; and, event mailings can be scheduled for automatic future generation. PLATO can decide how to handle non-member registrations. The non-member might be able to register online or perhaps a member would be required to include non-members when they sign up and pay for an event.
- C. Gail Gordon also emphasized the customizable features of the *Wild Apricot* software. Templates can be developed for special events and lectures which simplifies the work for the organizers. Authorized users can access the database from home and run queries to analyze trends; they can check the status of renewals and generate reminders. It is difficult to extract reliable financial data that spans three systems now, but with *Wild Apricot* all of the information would be stored in one database. Financial data would be exported to *QuickBooks* accounting software for budgeting and monthly

analysis and reporting. Communication between the Board and the membership, between Coordinators and course participants, between Committees and members would be enhanced. Email lists could be developed without revealing private contact information of the recipients (see Section IV. B. above). Access security levels are set by email address permissions. The DCS Administrative Assistant would access this database; the DCS database would no longer be used. With an email address and password members could update their own record. The cost includes \$712.00 in one-time charges for scanner, shredder and printer, \$141.00 in on-going monthly fees for *Wild Apricot*, *QuickBooks* and the check scanning software, with an estimated total of \$1,882.00 for the April – June, 2014 implementation period. The estimate for the 2014-15 fiscal year is \$1,740.00 (which includes the raise in *QuickBooks*' monthly fees from \$20.00 to \$40.00).

- D. There were several questions. Mary Boyd asked if taking on the financial responsibility would affect PLATO's liability. Tim Otis said we're covered by general business liability (including bus trips) at a cost of approximately \$400.00 per year. This provides coverage of \$2,000,000.00 (2 million) per occurrence. A separate fidelity bond covers volunteers handling financial transactions. Procedures for handling membership registrations at events will have to be devised. Payments and other PLATO correspondence received at DCS will be put in a specially designated mailbox so that transactions will be handled efficiently. The Treasurer will handle refunds by writing the person a check. The check scanner does not recognize NSF. If there are not sufficient funds available to cover a member's payment by check then we would have to contact the person and apply any applicable surcharges. Grace periods for renewing membership could be instituted, but it is possible to customize the software to require that membership fees would have to be paid to complete the event registration. Will additional staffing be required to implement and maintain this system? Scott Kolar indicated that much of the work will be assumed by the Committees. Bob Blitzke said core teams with special skills will have to be trained as support within the Committees. Additional features that could be added at a later date include an online directory, member/course forums, blogs, and restricted member-only web pages. With the Board's approval, the software could be operational by June 2014 which would coincide with the annual membership renewal period.
- E. **MOTION:** Tim Otis made a motion that: "PLATO's Board of Directors approves the recommendations of the Revenue/Database Task Force to implement the system, as presented, for managing PLATO revenues and developing and maintaining an integrated database. This approval will allow the Task Force to take the necessary actions to have the new system fully operational prior to July 1, 2014. The Task Force will keep the Board fully apprised of progress and any problems encountered in implementing the new system." Aleta Murray seconded it. There was a discussion about setting an approved maximum cost. Sybil Better proposed the following amendment and Mary Boyd seconded it. The amended proposal reads as follows (see italics): "PLATO's Board of Directors approves the recommendations of the Revenue/Database Task Force to implement the system, as presented, for managing PLATO revenues and developing and maintaining an integrated database. This

approval will allow the Task Force to take the necessary actions to have the new system fully operational prior to July 1, 2014. The Task Force will keep the Board fully apprised of progress and any problems, *including substantial cost increases*, encountered in implementing the new system.” Patricia Becker called the question and the amended motion passed unanimously.

- F. There was continued discussion of the need for an expanded website committee to handle the additional responsibilities. Scott Kolar said there may be a need for a Technology Committee in the future. Greg Bell suggested that Communications will have to discuss the possible changes and options for more frequent newsletters and email announcements. The Communication Committee was charged with investigating the need for additional support for website activities.

VII. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Special Events – Bob Blitzke

1. Bob said he will be on vacation from June 12th to June 30th.
2. He is training two new trip organizers, Peggy Anderson and Janet Cabot. A trip to the Harley Museum is one of the future events being planned.

B. Curriculum – Lauren Blough

1. Lewis Bosworth and Mary Boyd will be the principal organizers of the Fall 2014 Preview following Frank Power’s successful restructuring of the event. Mary said she has reserved the space at the Madison Senior Center for the fall and for spring 2015.
2. Curriculum approved the Committee charges but is working on the responsibilities of the Chair/Co-chair.
3. There are ten courses to be offered this summer and, if all of the “regulars” return and all of the new proposals materialize, there will be 47 courses for the Fall 2014 Semester.

C. Membership – Mary DeWolf

1. Mary DeWolf reported that membership passed the 1,000 mark!
2. Mary distributed new promotional material including an updated PLATO sticker with the web address, a notepad featuring the tags that describe the topics of courses and events that PLATO offers, and a card with the web address and tags. The intention is to distribute these on outreach visits so that the people they meet aren’t left empty-handed. The colorful 8 x 11 placard will be posted in locations such as 55+ residences, senior centers, grocery stores and

libraries. An ad will be placed in the Madison Senior Center's newsletter "The Messenger."

D. Fund Development – Tim Otis

1. At the May 1st meeting the Committee will discuss a strategy to energize the fund raising activities. The 501 (c) (3) status allows more options for fund development.
2. The PLATO sponsored scholarships will be officially awarded at a ceremony in Union South on April 29th. PLATO increased funding this year to \$2,500.00 for each of the four scholarships for a total of \$10,000.00. Aleta Murray asked if we could give PLATO members "scholarships" for bus trips. Tim responded that assistance in the form of reduced or waived membership fees is available.
3. Scott Kolar mentioned that the *Wild Apricot* software has an option for handling donations. Sybil Better asked if membership dues are tax deductible. Gail Gordon indicated that PLATO would have to send members a letter stating the fair market value of the membership for it to qualify as tax deductible.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Patricia Becker reminded us that April 23rd is Administrative Assistant's Day/Week. She will send a card to Wendy and encouraged others to do so.
- B. Frank Power reported that the Social Opportunities Task Force completed their four-session Arts Café experiment with the April 16th event. There were 42 in attendance. The "light and lively" theatrical performance was well received and the two PLATO member artists engaged people by taking them on a tour of their exhibits at the Madison Senior Center. Frank will make a report on the experiment as a whole at the May meeting.
- C. The Bylaws Committee is meeting on April 25th and will make a presentation on the revision of the Resolutions document at the May Board meeting.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was presented.

Meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

NOTE: Next meeting is Friday, May 16, 2014 9:30 a.m. at DCS - 21 N. Park, Room 7041.

Respectfully submitted,
Lauren Blough