

## PLATO BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Friday, February 17, 2012 - 9:30 a.m.  
DCS Office, 21 North Park, Madison, WI

Present: Tim Otis, Chair, Patricia Becker, Greg Bell, Lauren Blough, Mary Boyd, Harold Green, Mike Lovejoy, Frank Power, Judy Sadowsky, Wendy Kerr, Barry Orton.

- I. CALL TO ORDER** – T. Otis called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.
- II. MINUTES** – The minutes of the January 20, 2012 meeting were approved.
- III. TREASURER’S REPORT** – Mike Lovejoy
  - A. Mike Lovejoy noted that as of the end of January approximately 84% of the revenues (mainly membership dues) have been received and about 63% of the expenses have been incurred. In March Wendy will provide the quarterly report that will include administrative costs through the end of February covering 8 months in total.
  - B. Upcoming expenses include: donations to locations that provide classroom space, approximately \$1,500.00 for the 2012 Spring Banquet, *The Agora* production costs, and scholarship awards which have yet to be determined. Some disbursements (e.g. *The Agora*) may extend into the next fiscal year. PLATO might overspend this year but the amount can be covered.
- IV. PRESIDENT’S REPORT** – Tim Otis
  - A. Tim Otis reported that the Spring Preview on February 15<sup>th</sup> was a big success. This was due to Frank Power’s masterful limiting of the coordinators’ presentations which were completed in under an hour. Frank had contacted coordinators beforehand to stress the importance of making short statements. Pat Guttenberg, Madison Senior Center Program Director, was also very happy with the improved operation. The Board congratulated Frank and agreed that attendees were appreciative of the shortened 1<sup>st</sup> half that allowed them time to talk to the individual coordinators. The Chorus was a big hit, too. The arrangement of tables upstairs worked well and many people were engaged in gathering information and materials. However, there were some courses that were not represented and the suggestion was made to encourage the absent course leaders to stay around for a while at the next Preview. The attendance was estimated to be about 250. As usual, refreshments were well organized by the Special Events staff and this contributed to the function’s running so smoothly. Wendy Kerr suggested that a brief agenda noting the time frames - 1) coordinators’ presentations from 1:30 – 2:30 p.m., 2) refreshments at 2:30 p.m. and 3) meet with coordinators upstairs at 2:45 p.m. - be included in future preview publicity so people know what to expect.

- B. Tim Otis and Pat Becker met with Barry Orton at DCS to discuss the possibility of hiring interns or work study students to help Wendy with the expanding work load resulting from increased PLATO membership and activities. There may be costs involved for PLATO.

## V. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

### A. Curriculum and Facilities – Harold Green

1. Harold noted that the Curriculum Committee is working on improving the support provided by the committee liaisons to the course coordinators. Liaisons will once again ask the coordinators to help the committee assemble statistics by taking attendance and reporting results 1) after the third week and 2) at the end of the semester. The objective is to analyze the data to see if PLATO is reaching a significant portion of the membership with the classes offered. There has been no discussion of canceling courses with minimal attendance. A survey that was done 3 or 4 years ago indicated that about 250 people, not a majority, took advantage of senior learning provided through classes. Mary Boyd said the information collected showed a predominant interest in the humanities and this was helpful in Special Events Committee planning for events that complement the course subjects.
2. It was suggested that the Curriculum Committee write an article for the next issue of the *Persimmon* to explain the rationale for collecting the attendance data.

### B. Communication and Membership CAM (formerly Outreach) – Tim Otis

1. The committee welcomed 3 new members at last week's meeting. There was discussion about the marketing and branding of PLATO in the community to make it more visible and to help with the recruitment and retention of PLATO members.
2. Continued updating of the PLATO website is an ongoing project.

### C. Special Events - Mary Boyd

1. The Special Events Committee did not meet in February. The next meeting is scheduled for March 5<sup>th</sup> when 3 new members are expected to attend. Mary received a call from someone representing the East Towne shopping mall. They told her that the parking lot cannot be used while people take bus trips unless a fee of \$7.50 per car is paid. That lot has been used because it's a good meeting place on a direct route (East Washington Ave.). Mary is looking for other locations. Hy-Vee on East Washington might be an option. The objection from East Towne may be a result of the huge volume of people using spaces during last year's protests at the Capitol.

2. A trip to the Brewers/Giants game on May 23<sup>rd</sup> is under discussion. Tickets are available at half-price (\$20) if at least 50 are ordered. A full busload is 55 riders. The payment is due 1 month before the trip. Mary asked for Board approval to purchase the tickets before the 50 people have been confirmed for the trip. Approval was given to secure the good price. The risk seems minimal for an event like this.
3. Mary noted that Scott Kolar suggested a trip to the Great Lakes Naval Station in Waukegan, Illinois. She will look into it. Planning is underway for a trip to the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium in Dubuque and a docent led tour of the new Chazen Art Museum followed by lunch at the University Club (limited to 40).
4. Other suggestions were Old World Wisconsin, the Susan Lawrence Dana house and the Lincoln Museum in Springfield IL combined with a stop in New Salem. This would entail an overnight stay. The request for assistance in planning a trip to Vicksburg in the spring for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration hasn't progressed and would likely be a fall event. Marv Beatty put Mary in contact with a travel agent friend who might help with the organization as this excursion would also involve overnight stays. The Vicksburg trip will not be listed on the website until there are concrete plans available for posting.
5. Mary met with Amy Overby from the Madison Community Foundation. The Foundation received a grant of \$300,000.00 to promote and present humanities programs for seniors in Dane County public libraries. The Madison Community Foundation will provide the libraries with the money for speakers. Amy suggested that PLATO members could be resources for the presentations and that we might be a co-sponsor of the project. Mary suggested that we might invite the Foundation to the PLATO Spring Luncheon where they might present a short video on the project as a way to cultivate interest.

This collaboration would be a way to promote PLATO in Dane County communities outside of Madison and to address Issue 5 in the Strategic Plan: "Explore opportunities to develop participatory, member-led teaching and learning programs in outlying communities of Dane County as a part of PLATO's programmatic offerings." Harold Green said he had been contacted by David Sharpe, member of the Stoughton Commission on Aging, for information on starting a PLATO branch in their community.

D. University Relations

Relations between PLATO and the University continue to go well.

## VI. OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS

### A. Leadership Development – Patricia Becker

1. Pat Becker reported that 16 people attended the New Member Orientation on January 31<sup>st</sup> at Oakwood West. Three were non-members. Some requests/suggestions were made during the Q&A following the presentations and during the informal get together. One attendee asked that a distinction be made between the north and the east side program offerings. She asked that more attention be paid to providing the north side with courses. This led to a discussion about the participatory nature of PLATO and the need for people on the north side to get together to identify locations and course leaders on desired topics. That's the process for establishing PLATO classes in any community.
2. Mary Boyd gained a new Special Events Committee member and at least 2 of the non-members joined at the Spring Preview so, although the turnout was small, there were benefits. Combining the orientation with the Joe Elder lecture was a good idea.
3. A discussion followed regarding the responsibility for fostering new members. Wendy sends a welcome letter when they join. Leadership Development has held one orientation per year. It was suggested that the Communication and Membership Committee get in touch with them shortly after they join, but there are logistical problems with contacting approximately 150 new registrants throughout the year.
4. The Leadership Development Task Force is charged with identifying and mentoring new leaders for PLATO which is part of the responsibility assigned to the "Nominating and Leadership Committee" named in Article XI Section 4 of the Bylaws. In reply to Mary Boyd's question regarding the appointment and terms of Committee Chairs, Tim Otis noted that the Bylaws state: "The Chair (and Co-chair, if appropriate) of Standing Committees shall be appointed annually by the PLATO President, after consultation with Committee members, and with concurrence of the Board Directors." (Article XI Section 3) It could be beneficial to appoint co-chairs to ease transition of committee leadership.

### B. The Agora - Lauren Blough

115 submissions have been received for the 2012 issue of *The Agora*. The Board met on February 13<sup>th</sup>. Subeditors made reading/viewing copies for their groups and have begun the process of review.

### C. PLATO Charitable Fund Development – Barry Orton

The agreement stipulating the relationship between Continuing Studies and PLATO is awaiting signature by UW staff. Hopefully the documents will be signed in the next week or so. Once the fund is established the Foundation will be authorized to write checks.

D. 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration – Judy Sadowsky

The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration was tentatively planned for the first Sunday in October from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. After some discussion Wendy suggested that it be changed to a Friday evening from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. The Celebration Committee’s next meeting is on March 12th Judy said they were considering Harland Samson, former UW Dean and PLATO co-founder, as a featured speaker for the event.

## VII. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Tim Otis reported that the group working on updating the Bylaws met. They will present the proposed changes at the March Board meeting.

## VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. A copy of the proposed revision to the PLATO Mission statement was distributed with the agenda. Greg Bell thought the statement’s specific focus on scholarships could become outdated and that the charitable mission might be broadened and made less restrictive. There wasn’t enough time for a thorough discussion so the proposal will be included on the March agenda. Fred Ross will be invited to attend. It would be helpful to have Fred and Marv Beatty, the architects of the project, on hand for the discussion.
- B. Mike Lovejoy, Treasurer, made a proposal to the Board requesting “permission to transfer PLATO assets made up of the value of MGE stock and other accounts to equal \$80,000.00 to the UW Foundation to establish a quasi-endowment for PLATO.” Judy Sadowsky seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

PLATO has \$75,000.00 in MGE stock, \$20,000.00 in a money market account, and \$8,000.00 in checking. The advantage of a quasi-endowment is that the principal can be accessed at any time and the UW does not have to approve the withdrawal. In reply to a question about the possibility of transferring only a portion of the MGE stock value, Mike noted that PLATO would have to continue to manage a portfolio in that instance. The full transfer to the UW Foundation relieves PLATO of that duty.

- C. Tim Otis will email to Nino Amato, President of the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups to invite him to be the speaker at the Spring Luncheon on May 17<sup>th</sup>. If he is not available perhaps David Ward or Paul Soglin might be contacted. A topic could be how learning in retirement is beneficial to aging.

- D. The Nominating Committee appointees are Judy Sadowsky, Pat Becker, Marv Beatty and Lauren Blough.

**IX. FUTURE BUSINESS**

Discussion of the Board's role in providing leadership and policy development for the PLATO organization was delayed for a future meeting. What are the Board's roles and responsibilities in this unique organization?

Meeting adjourned at 11:12 a.m.

**NOTE:** Next meeting Friday, March 16, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. DCS - 21 N. Park, Room 7041.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lauren Blough