



Annual President's Report May 2022

By Kathy Brown, President, PLATO Board of Directors, 2021 - 2022

In its 35th year PLATO continues to have an ongoing success story to share! Our tagline which reads "where love of learning never gets old" has been our guiding principle even through the second year of a world-wide pandemic. **Thanks to all PLATO members** who participated in our array of offerings that make this such a vibrant and engaging organization. The hard work of hundreds of volunteers and our PLATO members helped us not just ride out the pandemic, but flourish and learn new concepts along the way! This is life-long learning in action!

PLATO's Core Services

Our course offerings came back close to pre-pandemic levels with 89 courses offered over the year by our dedicated **course coordinators**. More formats were available this year to give our members choices, such as virtual or in-person classes and explorations into a hybrid format for a few courses. Of the 89 courses, 55 were virtual. This virtual format was often a preferred option for a variety of reasons, such as traveling or mobility issues or personal choice during the pandemic. There certainly was additional "life-long learning" involved for all of us in navigating the online format that was necessitated by the pandemic. In-person courses resumed last Fall, and 34 courses have been available in that format. This format provided a welcome treat to join fellow PLATO members in the classrooms. Thanks to the **Curriculum Committee** and all the **course coordinators** for their dedicated time and talents to make these courses possible.

PLATO members were appreciative of virtual lectures ranging from critical race theory to Wisconsin's history of cocktails. These were hosted by the **Special Events Committee**. In case you missed any of the virtual lectures, they are available from PLATO's home page under "Past Recordings". Although opportunities to view virtual theater trips were regularly posted on our website, members were very enthusiastic about the return of the first Milwaukee theater trip this spring. The monthly social breakfast gatherings returned after the pandemic and have been a popular opportunity to engage with other PLATO members and some potential new members. The Walks in Dane in the summer and early Fall continued to be well attended and very informative.

To be resilient during pandemic times meant securing guidance not only from the CDC and Dane County Health but also from within PLATO. We were guided by the expertise of five of our own members with public health, medical, and legal backgrounds who formed our own **PLATO Covid Advisory Workgroup**. The collaboration between this Workgroup and the **PLATO Board** helped our organization walk through the pandemic with our eyes open since we were driven by Public Health principles. Thanks to this dedicated group who guided us during the pandemic.

Our **treasurer** reports that PLATO is in sound financial health even after two years of a pandemic that disrupted our typical programming. We have a healthy cash balance and membership renewals that allow us to achieve our projected revenue numbers.

PLATO's Creativity and Ingenuity

The **Agora Editorial Board** published Volume 7 of its biennial journal of arts and ideas last Fall, and it contained 40 pieces submitted by PLATO members. The entries from this Volume could be enjoyed in printed or online formats. On a bi-weekly basis, members could enjoy *Agora* features in the Tuesday Weekly Update email along with audio or video comments by the artists available on PLATO's website thanks to a collaboration with the **Technology Committee**.

The **Diversity Awareness Committee** continued to foster our desire for life-long learning by initiating a new educational feature in the Tuesday Weekly Update emails called Did You Know. These features highlighted notable contributions of people outside the mainstream population who were often unknown to the readers.

The talents of the **Technology Committee** volunteers proved invaluable as they provided behind-the-scenes assistance to other PLATO committees to enhance the offerings of our organization. These committee volunteers maintained our website and redesigned it to meet the changing needs of the organization. Because of our strong online presence and infrastructure, we were able to quickly move to virtual programming and continue to offer that format even as pandemic numbers subside.

The **Membership & Communication Committee** reported that our membership numbers are close to pre-pandemic levels. As part of this year's renewal process, all members received an email from PLATO asking for feedback about our services. This Committee initiated a new campaign starting this Spring that is featured monthly in the Tuesday Weekly Update emails. These human-interest elements include photographs of those featured along with a variety of formats that highlight the value of membership in PLATO.

The PLATO Education Fund continued to be well supported by our members during our annual fundraising campaign. The **Fund Development Committee** members researched how best to have an impact on those in need with the funds collected. Part of PLATO's mission is to support programs providing educational opportunities for learners of all ages in greater Madison.

PLATO Committees

Thank you to all the committee members who volunteered their time and talents.

Curriculum Committee	Finance Committee
Fund Development Committee	Membership & Communication Committee
Special Events Committee	Technology Committee
The Agora Editorial Board	Diversity Awareness Committee
Covid Advisory Workgroup	Nominating Committee

PLATO Board of Directors

Thank you to those who served on the PLATO Board 2021 – 2022

Officers:

Kathy Brown, President
Rod McKenzie, Vice President
Scott Kolar, Treasurer
Patricia Herrling, Secretary
Michael Stevens, Past President

Standing Committee Chairs

Paul Thompson, Curriculum Committee Chair
Carla Dilorio, Special Events Committee Co-Chair
Hedy Lukas, Membership & Communication Chair
Scott Kolar, Technology Committee Chair
Rod McKenzie, Fund Development Chair

At-Large Directors

Alan Capelle
Jatinder Cheema
Dory Christensen
Mike Kernats
Sharon Scattish

PLATO Board Members Completing Service this Year

Sharon Scattish At-Large Director 2019 - 2022
Michael Stevens President 2018 – 2020, Vice President 2016 – 2018
Paul Thompson Curriculum Committee Chair 2020 - 2022

- Scott Kolar is stepping down as Treasurer, but he remains on the Board as Technology Committee Chair

Election Results

Congratulations to the following officers and board members who were recently elected and will take office on July 1 for the 2022 – 2023 fiscal year.

Rod McKenzie	President
Mike Kernats	Vice President
Jatinder Cheema	Treasurer
Patricia Herrling	Secretary
MaryJo MacSwain	At-Large Director

PLATO on the Move

PLATO has become more independent over the past few years as our relationship with the UW-Madison Division of Continuing Studies (DCS) has changed. Last June we hired our own office coordinator, and now, due to space restrictions imposed on DCS by campus building projects, we have moved from campus to our new office at Oakwood Village West. This move has expanded our long-term partnership with Oakwood Village since they continue to host some of our courses and lectures. Our new mailing address and phone number are shown on our website and are listed below.

To reflect the changes within PLATO because of our move and independence, the **PLATO Board** conducted a very thorough review of our bylaws. The Board approved the updated bylaws to reflect these changes and other improvements that better identify the work of PLATO. The updated bylaws can be found on our website.

PLATO Staff

Stephanie Steigerwaldt
Louise Fowler

We were pleased to welcome Stephanie last June as our administrative services and office coordinator. She joined Louise, who has served in the PLATO office since 2014. Louise has announced her plans for retirement effective July 1. We are most appreciative of the years of service Louise has dedicated to PLATO. Her historical knowledge of our organization has always been very helpful.

PLATO Contact Information

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