

Committee Name: Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Chair: Jeff Commings

Minutes recorded by: Chris Campbell

Session #3

Date of meeting: 3/13//2024

Time of meeting: 8 pm EDT

Actions Taken:

1. None

Number of committee members present: 6

Absent: 6

Guests: 1

Present: Jeff Commings (Chair), Chris Campbell (Vice Chair), Kenny Brisbin (VP Community Services, Ex Officio), Daniel Paulling (National Office, Ex Officio), Vicki Shu, Nadine Ford, Tim Murphy, Lucila Davies, Michael Moore (Guest)

Not Present: Leann Rossi, Ally Sega, Mary Jurey, Virgil Chancy, Laura Dennison, Lina Bot

Minutes

The meeting started at 8:00pm EDT

1. A quorum was not present, so the minutes from the February meeting were not approved. MSA is deferred until the April meeting.
2. The revised D&I Committee letter to LMSC leadership (MSA last meeting) was due to go out later in the week. As noted in earlier minutes, this letter describes the position of LMSC D&I Chair/Coordinator and also describes the desired characteristics and expectations of volunteers to fill these positions. As noted in the January minutes, this position has been established in 8 LMSCs already. LMSC points of contact for the existing positions are being sought. Information should be forwarded to Jeff at Diversity@USMastersSwimming.com.
3. The subcommittee tasked with looking into the potential for establishing partnering relationships with existing USA Swimming Clubs with an eye towards setting up USMS Teams associated with them (especially in areas with populations underserved by USMS) presented follow up data from their meeting on 2/26/2024. The salient updates to the initial report (submitted to the February meeting) are:
 - a. It was noted that many of the previous “good examples” cited in the previous report are from affluent communities, where the households have available amounts of disposable income. This is the “elephant in the room” that is frequently overlooked. While many of the underserved communities that we seek to target have successful USA Swimming programs, the additional cost burdens associated with a partnered USMS Club are often prohibitive to many of the targeted households. E.g., while families will pay the costs for their children to swim on teams, the extra costs of getting the parents into the water (parents being our most obvious target group) may not be sustainable. This situation is further complicated by many of these parents not being able to swim themselves. As Virgil pointed out in a follow on call, young swimmers on these USA Swimming teams are perfect ambassadors for our sport, and their parents already have some level of engagement. Additionally, these target facilities very often have other robust aquatic fitness programs. Why not USMS programming? The reasons seem to be facility availability, the availability of qualified and motivated leadership personnel, cost, and education.
 - b. How to work around these obstacles?
 - i. As Virgil also points out, the noted aquatic fitness programs are often subsidized. Communities with such facilities really like their adult fitness programs. Why not Masters? The reason seems to be related to education. Communities and facilities are often unclear or unaware of the Mission, Vision and Goals of USMS. The name “Masters”

is itself intimidating. Despite the fact that about 80% of USMS membership doesn't compete, the connotation associated with our name implies high levels of technical expertise and experience, both in terms training and competition. The subcommittee believes that this is a branding issue—our very name frightens away those potential members, the ones with little or no swimming background, that we seek to add. How do we steer these prospective members and facilities our way?

ii. One way to get past this is with ALTS programming. Again, though, this can be difficult to sell to a facility which may already offer adult swim lessons through different organizations. However, the importance of being able to bring in someone from off the street and teach them how to swim cannot be underestimated. ALTS presents a unique entry opportunity.

iii. Lucy noted that many of the City-run facilities in Los Angeles are partnering with USA Swimming to train their lifeguards as swim coaches and officials. This is fertile ground—developing a similar partnership with facility management groups could yield significant dividends for our efforts terms of developing a pool of qualified program leaders.

iv. Are there ways to bring even modest USMS programming to facilities which already have adult fitness options? More importantly, are there ways to make USMS programming affordable?

4. Discussion of USMS Transgender Policies. As noted in last month's meeting minutes, while D&I can offer insights and input to the process, it is not the task of this Committee to rewrite or determine policy or rules. That is under the purview of the Board of Directors and the Rules and Legislation Committees. USMS once again has established a task force (with both Jeff and Kenny as members) with the aim of getting ahead of the game—being proactive rather than reactive when situations arise (e.g., Lia Thomas' litigation to compete). While no judgment is implied, it was noted that the issue of Transgender competition, within USMS or without, creates a tremendous amount of swirl and churn relative to the number of actual incidences. Should we focus more on inclusivity during workouts? It was also noted that neither this subcommittee, nor the D&I Committee itself have a Transgender Swimmer seated with them, providing the insight, perspective and information that only they can supply. In that regard, are we qualified to discuss this issue in any meaningful way?

5. VP Community Services National Update from Kenny.

a. USMS President Ed Coates and the Board of Directors have issued directives and desired goals to the Vice Presidents for their committees during 2024. The National level would like D&I to find ways to highlight the diversity of USMS membership.

i. Suggestion—small “good news” reports forwarded from the LMSCs. These would be smaller in scope than and separate from the Annual DE&I Award.

ii. Should D&I members from LMSCs be part of a Peer to Peer call? This would seem to be a good idea, but the P2P process appears to be in the process of revamping. There are many Peer to Peer calls, and there seems to be a level of “fatigue” associated with them, resulting in very small levels of turnout and participation. Stay tuned for updates.

iii. Promotion of D&I at Relay 2024. Who on the Committee is going? Are you willing to help present and/or be willing to share experiences? A concern was noted that Relay is being held concurrently with the National Coaches Clinic. This conflict is unfortunate, because much of what D&I hopes to present is relevant to coaches and their approaches to D&I issues. Our target audience is already reduced.

Next meeting scheduled for April 3, 2024 at 8:00pm EDT (first Wednesday of the month, per usual)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 EDT.