

2019 Leadership Summit  
OTC, Colorado Springs, CO

I had the honor of attending the 2019 Leadership Summit at the Olympic Training Center in late April. While this was a brief, weekend-long workshop, it was an amazing experience to be able to work with coaching staff from all over the country, support staff and athletes at the OTC.

All the participants, coaches and athletes, were divided up into 5 groups, coinciding with the Olympic rings, and while we were constantly mingling with all the other groups, we had a core group of folks we worked with so we a lot of opportunity to network and form bonds that I can see lasting for a lifetime.

The first day was spent primarily traveling, but there was programming scheduled for the later part of the day. The first session was spent in introductions and setting ground rules for the group and the weekend. The last part of the day was focused on values and behaviors. This was a timed exercise, which could have easily taken several days. We were given a list of 30 values and were given a 5-step process of narrowing down the top five and the bottom 3. I think this type of activity would be good at an LSC level, to re-evaluate our own values to ensure they are still relevant to our goals, are we staying swimmer-focused? Ultimately I'd want to know if our LSC's behaviors align with our values, and if not, what do we need to do to get back on track.

During this first session we also looked at our behavior. Everyone wrote down 5 things we always do, 5 things we never do, and 5 things we should do. We then looked at the 5 things we always do and see that list and our core values were aligned. We compared the 5 things we never do and see if they lined up with our 5 things we never do. Again, might this be something we can do at an LSC level? Are our behaviors aligned with our values?

We ended the evening creating a Team Banner for the weekend. Our group chose "be where your feet are." Wherever we are, whatever we are doing are we where are feet are? Being in the moment and giving it your best effort. Again, I want to challenge the LSC, are we where are feet are? If not, what do we need to ensure we are being in the moment and giving our best effort to our swimmers.

The second day was spent on strength and leadership. The day started off with an hour-long Olympian's panel; Maya DiRado, Natalie Coughlin, and Davis Tarwater. These three former olympians also happen to be on the BOD for USA Swimming and represent the athlete's voice. This session only lasted an hour, but could have easily gone on all morning. Both coaches and athletes alike were absolutely engaged. While a lot of what was said focused around performance and how to handle the good and the bad, a lot of what they said can easily translate to any aspect of life. A few nuggets of wisdom they shared are very much what I think leadership should be all about, whether it's an athlete on deck, a coach and their team, or an LSC. Simply we need to: 1. Commit to our goals. 2. The value of swimming (or anything) is in

the process. 3. Struggles is an opportunity for reflection and evaluation. 4. Accept, respect and get better with feedback. 5. A bad outcome is not failure, but information...information that can be evaluated. 6. How am I making the people around me better. 7. Take ownership. 8. Leading by example is a personal commitment to excellent...live it...work it..believe it.

The second thing we focused on that day was governance and the importance of being involved. We discussed in smaller groups and then as a larger group what we like our LSC's to do better. We discovered not all LSCs do the same thing. USA Swimming has a coach mentorship program...I would like to challenge them to come up with an LSC mentorship program. I feel we ad an LSC can learn a lot from other LSCs. In general, the majority of coaches want to see LSCs do the following: 1. Communicate better: ISI can certainly improve on this. While information goes out, it often just goes to club contacts and it's up to them to disseminate the information...unfortunately, this appears not to be done in a regular fashion. I would like to see information either going to all swimmers/coaches and/or all coaches. I would like to see the ISI website better utilized as a source of information. 2. Coches want to see more support and professional development opportunities for new/junior coaches. 3. Mentorship opportunities. Perhaps getting information about the program offered by USA Swimming on the LSC website with the USA Swimming link as well as applicable forms readily available.

USA Swimming has all the best ideas from the best programs from all over available to anyone on their website: [USA Swimming.org/LEAP](http://USA_Swimming.org/LEAP). On this site there is an LSC resource library.

The rest of the day was spent on DISC Assessments. Prior to arriving at this summit everyone was asked to answer a questionnaire. Based on our responses, our leadership style could be categorized into 1 (or 2) of 4 groups: 1. Dominance - extrovert. 2. Influence - extrovert. 3. Steadiness - introverts. 4. Compliance - introverts. As we worked through these groups it was clear these categories were not presented to us as a way to change us, but rather a way to be aware of how we work and how others may work.

The last day was spent on service leadership. The day ended with all the coaches and athletes participating in a service project. It would be a big undertaking, but I'd like to see the LSC do an LSC-wide day of service. Coordinate an activity that the LSC can do as a whole, across the state.

Prior to the service project, we spent the morning with Susan Teeter, how talked about building a team culture. She showed us several very simple ways to build a team culture and learn life lessons in the process. It's an easy way to see where you athletes are...are they where their feet are during practice?

We finished the morning coming together as an entire group and talked about Servant Leadership, the idea of leading in a top-down triangle vs a "normal" triangle. Defined, Servant Leadership shares power. Puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform

at their best. It is not thinking less of yourself, but rather thinking about yourself less. I feel like if we manage our team, LSC, or whatever in this fashion, we would be able to accomplish a whole lot more. I would like to see our LSC adopt this type of leadership...helping the whole group success rather than "what will I or my team get out of this?"

I unfortunately did not get to participate in the rest of Saturday's events as I needed to return for our LSC's HOD meeting. And while I was disappointed because I had to leave, I felt it important to be present for our LSC as that is what I was nominated to do.