

I attended the USA Swimming Leadership Summit from April 20 – 22 in Houston TX. Maddie Buck, Brooke Cloutier and Coach Zach Cravens accompanied me. We stayed at the Marriott, swam at Dad's Club and the University of Houston and had classes at University of Houston and the Marriott. There were 119 athletes and 56 coaches from around the country. I stayed with a swimmer from West Texas and I was in the Yellow Group. Each of the 5 groups were the colors of the Olympic Rings.

On Friday, we first swam at Dad's Club for a two hour practice. Then we return to hotel dinner and opening ceremonies. One of the cooler things that happened is that Tim Hinchey (CEO/President of USA Swimming) kicked off the event. A group called 'Forward Progress' with Maricela Shukie leading a talk about being an introvert and/or extrovert. Introverts are more closed in and extroverts are more outgoing but it is a continuum and you can be somewhere in the middle. Great leaders should have co-leader that is closer to the other vert of you.

On Saturday, after breakfast we went to University of Houston. We swam for 90mins at first. After a quick second breakfast we went back to learning about leadership. We continued on learning about the vert's and then did some leadership strength activities. There were four categories; executing, influencing, relationship building & strategic thinking. I fell in the strategic thinking category, which means I focus on questioning; I am logic focused, skeptical & challenging. We split in to the four groups and had a small competition to see who build the highest tower out of marshmallows and dried pasta. Most of my group had the same idea of using a triangular base to the top. After three minutes of brainstorming and building, our tower was tallest and did fall over. We then focused on our strengths and weaknesses and found that we very similar whereas the other groups vastly different. Some of our strengths were also are weaknesses. We saw the good in having co-captains that were different from you for a better team. Next was lunch, then the gym and we did a trust exercise. We then learned about governance and one of the main takeaways was that athlete participation is very important in how to run your LSC. For many years, Indiana only had one athlete going to meetings and no Olympic trial swimmers. They then turned it around by getting athletes more involved and in a few short years and then held several trials swimmers. Maggie Vail, the Safe Sport person from USA Swimming talked about athlete voices. After that Forward Progress retook over the leadership activities, which included peer leadership. Praise (good), Constructive criticism (best) & criticism (worse). We had our second swim practice that day which was a 'swim meet'. Our group was not the best but we were not the worst. We returned to hotel for dinner. We made team banners for each team and our banner had the words 'Yellow not mellow' with a sun and hand traces acting as rays and my personality trait was advancement. Finishing the day, we learned about the power of reflection and smart goals.

On Sunday morning after breakfast, we did a community service project. We bagged 40,000 bags of vegetables, rice & yeast. We did this outside of the normal groups working with other people. We learned about the 10 principles of servant leadership. After that, we had a quick closing ceremony and departed.

I would thank the LSC for giving me this opportunity as the third person and USA Swimming & Forward progress for making the summit possible.

Respectively Summited,
T.J. Willis