



DATE: September 10, 2025
TO: USMS House of Delegates
FROM: Dawson Hughes – CEO
SUBJECT: 2025 CEO Report to the USMS House of Delegates

2025 has been a year like no other in the history of USMS for many of our national-level volunteer leaders and staff. At the same time for the vast majority of USMS members, College Club Swimmers, Grown-Up Swimmers, coaches, volunteers, and officials, it was no different than any other year. We collectively continue to deliver on the services and benefits promised to our members despite unexpected issues and projects. This memo provides high-level insights on areas of success and ongoing challenges to the future of USMS. Additional information is provided in the [2026 Business Plan assumptions](#).

Successes:

USMS will support the adult swimming goals of over 100,000 adult swimmers in 2025. Not all those swimmers are members but 73,000 support USMS financially.

By the end of the membership year, [USMS](#) is projecting 58,000 members. The network of clubs and events that have been built throughout the country operated by coaches, event directors, and volunteers remain the most valuable membership benefits. USMS provides those clubs with robust insurance, geographically targeted marketing, and development support through education, consulting, and grant programs. Members take advantage of numerous ancillary benefits like the Workout Library, *SWIMMER* Magazine, and other digital content daily.

[College Club Swimming](#) reached another record 9,665 swimmers, a 4% increase, with 220 on campus clubs. Four regional championships were held with a combined 2,593 swimmers. The 2025 TYR CCS Nationals was held in the western U.S. for the first time and reached capacity for both swimmers (1,553 total) and spectators (900 per day) in minutes. Work continues to seamlessly transition CCS swimmers to USMS clubs after graduation and encourage participation at USMS events while still in school. As part of those efforts, the CCS website was overhauled in advance of the 2025-26 season.

[Grown-Up Swimming](#) continues to track closely with projections doubling to 28 leagues with a projected 4,300 swimmers registered, an 87% increase from last year. First year leagues are averaging 81 swimmers this year, up 56% from 52 swimmers in 2024. Roughly 25% of Grown-Ups are also USMS members. Grown-Up Swimming has already contributed to growth in the USMS mission and is projected to breakeven financially in 2026 with USMS's financial investment beginning to show a return in 2027.

Our partnership with the [USA Swimming Foundation](#) continues to efficiently operate our [Adult Learn-to-Swim Grant program](#) and based on success of fundraising efforts in 2024, distributed \$140k in grants, an increase of \$40k from the year prior. The partnership with USA Swimming also achieved another goal in 2025 with USMS hosting the 2025 Sprint- and Long-Distance Open Water National Championships alongside USA Swimming's Open Water National and Junior Championships. The event was another example of building the swimming community, offering USMS members a unique opportunity to swim on an elite course, mingle with USA Swimming athletes, and showing young swimmers that their passion for swimming can last a lifetime.



[LaneMate](#) soft-launched early in the year as an effort to better support swimmers that may not have access to a USMS club or event or find swimming independently more convenient. [Video Stroke Analysis](#), which is an optional benefit for USMS members and LaneMate subscribers, also soft-launched at the same time. Unfortunately, due to staff turnover and resources having to be focused on other unexpected projects, both have yet to be fully marketed. The slower rollout has provided some time to make additional adjustments as we prepare to ramp up in the coming months.

The national office staff has been diligently working to implement improved and efficient technical capabilities. In addition to the new CCS website, the My Account functionality was updated to include member self-management of club transfers, upgrades, and mid-year adjustments to payment options.

A new and improved USMS event sanctioning process that will better integrate the marketing efforts behind the Calendar of Events with the event sanctioning and approval process including the measured pools database. We have worked closely with volunteer experts to ensure a more seamless process for event directors. We had hoped to fully launch the new functionality this fall but due to unexpected development needs and to ensure a seamless transition, our targeted rollout is now early 2026. More information and tutorials will be shared as the launch approaches.

Challenges:

After several years of steady membership growth, the traditional membership is projected to remain flat compared to 2024, despite 4% growth in the number of USMS clubs. The rate of retention continues to hover near 70% with the number of new and returning members only able to replace the 30% lost. These percentages have remained generally the same for decades.

The traditional USMS membership model faces challenges that lack easy solutions.

- Many clubs do not need the insurance coverage that we provide and do not see the value in requiring their swimmers to be members. This is not a new challenge, but it anecdotally seems to be increasing with both large and small USMS clubs.
- Efforts to recruit quality coaches and team administrators to build and grow USMS programming has had limited success. We have no material membership growth to show despite years of training and educating potential coaches, providing ongoing consulting and support, increased club marketing efforts, offering financial support to club start-up and growth initiatives, and more clubs.
- Many clubs and coaches find it cumbersome to require their swimmers to register which means USMS relies on event participation to capture those swimmers as members. Scoping is underway to provide clubs the ability to register their swimmers for USMS membership in bulk. However that won't solve the issues on its own and will have to be part of multi-faceted approach.
- Based on self-reporting during club registration there are roughly 31,000 swimmers participating with USMS clubs that are not USMS members.
- Many of our largest and most well-operated clubs are at capacity with no room for additional growth.
- Some aquatics facilities find USMS programming comes with unwanted headaches that outweigh the financial or community benefits of hosting USMS clubs and events.



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We are all aware of the unexpected legal and public relations challenges USMS is navigating. USMS has been thrust into the middle of a debate that it cannot solve and has forced us to use resources that preferably would have been directed to the mission of empowering adults to swim. USMS will have to navigate the associated issues into 2026, and we'll continue to update volunteers on progress and changes as appropriate and legally advisable.

The traditional membership challenges will require bold and creative solutions, and an organization focus that does not allow avoidable distractions to slow our progress. I plan to work closely with the board of directors and continue collaborating with volunteers from around the country to find solutions that drive incremental growth in the number of adults that USMS empowers to swim and the financial resources to support them.

USMS must meet the needs of both current and future members to successfully pursue our mission. That means appealing to not only those who enjoy traditional swim meets, value a strong connection with their club or coach, or prefer open water training and racing but also to those who may only be able to swim during open swimming hours or who swim exclusively in the summer.

USMS now has a robust suite of offerings to support all types of adult swimmers and welcome them into our swimming community. College Club Swimming and Grown-Up Swimming are successfully appealing to younger demographics to which USMS has historically struggled to attract. However, USMS also continues to have many of the same challenges to growth in the traditional members that have existed for decades.

In 2026, we'll continue to build out and fully implement newer programs like Grown-Up Swimming and LaneMate. We'll also continue to streamline operations through technological improvements, including the early planning of a major update to our event results database and capabilities.

However, the most important project will be to explore new, and perhaps bold adjustments in how we develop new USMS clubs and ensure existing clubs are maximizing their potential in attracting and retaining adult swimmers.

On behalf of the USMS national office, thank you for your dedication to USMS and taking part in the 2025 Annual Meeting.