

Vice President of Athlete Access & Opportunity

2025-2026 Annual Report

The Athlete Access & Opportunity portfolio is dedicated to expanding pathways into artistic swimming, reducing barriers to participation, and ensuring all athletes have opportunities to engage, develop, and succeed within our sport. Through community outreach, educational initiatives, and adaptive programming, we continue to strengthen the accessibility and inclusivity of artistic swimming across the United States.

Athlete Access & Opportunity

During the 2025-2026 season, the former Vice President of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion position was renamed **Vice President of Athlete Access & Opportunity** to better reflect the expanded vision and scope of this work. While inclusion remains a core value, the new title recognizes a broader commitment to creating pathways, removing barriers, and expanding opportunities for athletes across all areas of artistic swimming. This evolution allows the role to support growth initiatives that benefit athletes of all backgrounds, abilities, identities, and levels of participation, while ensuring that access and opportunity remain central to the future of our sport.

Throughout the season, efforts focused on creating broader participation opportunities, supporting education and coach development, and strengthening partnerships that help expand the reach of artistic swimming. Continued emphasis was placed on identifying and reducing barriers to participation while creating environments where all athletes can thrive.

A key initiative this year was a partnership with Classroom Champions, which connected USA Artistic Swimming National Team athletes with classrooms in the Los Angeles area. Through this program, athletes served as mentors and role models, helping students gain exposure to Olympic and Paralympic sport, learn valuable life skills, and build connections with elite athletes. This partnership expanded the reach of our National Team while creating meaningful educational opportunities for youth and increasing awareness of artistic swimming.

2026-2027 Priorities

- Expand access and participation opportunities across all levels of the sport.
- Increase educational resources for athletes, coaches, and clubs.
- Strengthen partnerships that support athlete development and community engagement.
- Continue identifying and addressing barriers to participation.
- Explore additional outreach opportunities that connect athletes with schools and community organizations.

Athletes with Disabilities (AWD)

The Athletes with Disabilities (AWD) Committee continued to advance adaptive artistic swimming opportunities throughout the 2025-2026 season. Major accomplishments included the first AWD educational presentation at Coaches College, Team USA participation in the international adaptive artistic swimming event in Mexico City, continued advocacy for recognition of Artistic Swimming within Special Olympics, and the successful AWD Invitational held during Junior/Senior Nationals. The committee also developed proposed program and rule modifications designed to create a more inclusive competitive environment.

2026-2027 Priorities

- Increase athlete recruitment and participation in adaptive artistic swimming programs.
- Expand educational resources and training opportunities for clubs and coaches.
- Continue efforts toward Special Olympics recognition for Artistic Swimming.
- Strengthen partnerships with organizations serving athletes with disabilities, including the United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA).
- Explore international development opportunities and support the continued growth of adaptive artistic swimming worldwide.

Looking Ahead

As USA Artistic Swimming continues to grow, the Athlete Access & Opportunity portfolio remains committed to ensuring that all athletes have pathways to participate, develop, and succeed in our sport. By expanding community engagement, supporting educational initiatives, and advancing adaptive programming, we will continue building a more inclusive and welcoming future for artistic swimming while creating opportunities for athletes of all abilities to thrive.

Respectfully submitted,

Monica Velazquez-Stiak

Vice President, Athlete Access & Opportunity