

Executive Summary

Retaining experienced coaches has become a growing challenge for competitive swimming. Despite the critical role coaches play in athlete development, coaching swim has been viewed as more of a professional career while the systems supporting coaches have not. In response to prior work on this subject, specifically the 2022 ASCA Fellows observational study on coach attrition and the 2025 *Swimpler Coach Compensation Survey* spearheaded by Doug Cornish, the 2025 ASCA Fellows Class used a mixed-methods approach, combining an ASCA coach sustainability survey with follow-up interviews with five high-retention USA Swimming teams identified through USA Swimming tenure data. The survey covered stressors, workload, benefits, paid time off (PTO), opportunities for advancement, workplace conditions, and organizational climate. These interviews provided further context on organizational structure, workload distribution, and coach support in high-retention programs.

The findings reveal three key themes: administrative burden is a major source of coach stress; many coaches lack access to health insurance, retirement benefits, and enough time off; and advancement pathways are often unclear or informal. Coaches were more likely to remain in the profession when organizations intentionally separated on-deck coaching duties from administrative tasks, offered stronger compensation and benefits, and created clear opportunities for advancement. These findings build on the growing body of work examining coach attrition and compensation, moving the conversation from documenting the problem toward identifying the organizational conditions that can address it.

Together, the 2022 ASCA Fellows observational study, the 2025 *Swim Coach Compensation Survey*, and the present study make clear that passion and motivation alone are simply not enough to sustain high-quality coaching over time. National organizations, including ASCA, should now take the lead in turning the established body of evidence into action. This study provides not only recommendations for addressing the organizational conditions identified in the findings, but also implementation roadmaps outlining potential pilot programs and practical initial rollouts (Appendix H). The ASCA Board and USA Swimming are well positioned to move from identifying solutions to taking action. The coaching community has demonstrated both the expertise and the willingness to contribute to this work. The burden of sustaining this profession, however, cannot continue to rest on the shoulders of individual coaches. Responsibility must now shift toward the organizations with the authority and resources to change the systems that support our greatest asset.