



HOSPITALITY RISING

A STUDENT SUMMIT

DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION COMPETITION

September 2025

About The J.W. Marriott, Jr. Institute

The **J.W. Marriott Jr. Institute at the University of Utah** is **redefining hospitality education** by focusing on leadership development and student engagement in ways that extend beyond the traditional industry approach. We believe that hospitality is not just about hotels and tourism—it is a mindset that fosters exceptional leadership, service, and strategic thinking across all fields. Our institute is designed to connect with students from diverse academic backgrounds, introducing them to the principles of hospitality through innovative experiences, industry collaborations, and hands-on learning opportunities. By emphasizing leadership as a core component of hospitality, we aim to inspire students to see its relevance in areas such as technology, healthcare, business, and beyond.

To get involved, and learn more about the institute, [visit our website](#) and connect with us on social media @marriottinstitute

About the Utah Tourism Industry Association (UTIA)

The **Utah Tourism Industry Association** is the **collective voice of Utah's tourism industry**. We advocate and educate to enhance Utah's economy and quality of life. UTIA strives to deliver exceptional value to its members. To that end, we offer a variety of member-driven public policy initiatives, business networking opportunities, marketing programs and educational offerings all to help our members and our industry succeed today and in the future. UTIA is a 501c6 non-profit organization.

To learn more about UTIA's mission and how to get involved, [visit their website](#).

Dear Participants,

We are delighted to welcome you to the inaugural Hospitality Rising Summit Competition at the University of Utah.

This competition is designed to give you a unique opportunity to assume the role of a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) and pitch a strategy for promoting a destination in Utah. Along the way, you'll showcase your creativity, innovative thinking, research skills, and marketing expertise while developing a deeper understanding of hospitality and tourism as dynamic and diverse fields.

One iconic Utah example of destination marketing can be found in Moab. In the early 1950s, Moab was recognized not for its natural beauty, but for its rich deposits of uranium, potash, and manganese. When demand for uranium declined sharply in the 1960s, the town's population fell dramatically. To revitalize the community, destination marketers rebranded Moab as a hub for outdoor recreation, breathtaking landscapes, film production, and a vibrant culture of arts and exploration. Today, Moab welcomes more than a million visitors each year, a powerful testament to the impact of strategic destination marketing.

For this competition, proposals will be submitted as recorded presentations and reviewed by a panel of judges. The top three most creative, well-organized, and feasible projects will be presented and awarded during the Summit on November 5, 2025

This document includes detailed information on competition guidelines and timelines, grading criteria, rules, and prizes. Please review the General Rules section for a comprehensive list of guidelines.

We can't wait to see what you create, and we wish you the very best in the competition!

Best regards,

Marc Brown

Executive Director

J.W. Marriott, Jr. Institute

Competition Categories Definitions

Destination Marketing Organization Competition Overview

A **Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)** is a specialized entity responsible for promoting a location to attract visitors, enhance tourism, and stimulate local economic growth. The primary role of a DMO is to create and implement strategic marketing campaigns that highlight the unique value of a destination, ensuring it remains competitive in the global travel market. Through branding, advertising, and partnerships, DMOs position their destinations as attractive options for leisure, business, and event-related travel.

For the **DMO Competition**, students will select a destination and assume the role of a DMO, developing a marketing campaign that effectively promotes the location. The campaign should identify key demand generators, which are attractions, cultural activities, natural landscapes, and significant events that encourage tourism. These can include historical landmarks, adventure tourism, seasonal festivals, and annual events that reflect the local culture and traditions.

Successful marketing strategies in destination promotion often incorporate partnerships with local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and transportation services, as well as collaborations with convention bureaus, travel agencies, and event organizers. Establishing strong alliances with these stakeholders allows for a more integrated approach to tourism promotion, ensuring visitors have access to well-rounded experiences and essential services. Additionally, leveraging digital marketing techniques, including social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and targeted advertising, can help maximize a destination's reach and engagement with potential travelers.

Beyond attracting tourists, an effective destination marketing campaign should also consider strategies to encourage economic development and investment in the area. This involves showcasing the destination's potential for new business opportunities, infrastructure growth, and real estate development.

To enhance the destination's appeal, students should research and incorporate major events and cultural festivals that draw visitors, such as film festivals, music events, food expos, or traditional celebrations unique to the location. These events serve as significant tourism drivers and provide valuable promotional opportunities to showcase the richness of a destination's cultural heritage.

The competition challenges participants to craft an innovative, data-driven marketing strategy that balances tourism promotion, local collaboration, and economic development. By effectively curating experiences and positioning the destination as a dynamic and attractive place to visit.

Competition Guidelines

Destination Marketing Organization

- Open to all currently enrolled college students in Utah
- Participants compete individually
- Participants must choose a destination (city or region) within Utah
- Create a presentation showcasing the destination's unique attractions, culture, events and accommodations
- Include marketing strategies like social media campaigns, partnerships, and events to attract travelers

Format: 10-minute recorded presentation using slides. Submission must include a video recording as well as a PDF export of the presentation slides.

Judging Criteria

DMO Project Evaluation

1. **Creativity & Innovation** (Is the project original and forward-thinking?)
2. **Marketing Strategy & Execution** (Are marketing tactics innovative, effective, and feasible?)
3. **Branding & Storytelling** (Does the project effectively showcase the destination's unique value proposition?)
4. **Overall Impact & Persuasiveness** (Does the project inspire confidence in execution and potential success?)
5. **Visual & Presentation Quality** (Is the project well-organized and visually appealing?)

General Rules

Eligibility

- Open to all actively enrolled college students in Utah
- Must attend the Hospitality Rising Summit on November 5, 2025

Submission

- All materials must be submitted by **October 20, 2025**
- Late submissions will not be considered unless an official extension is announced
- Only one entry per person
- Materials must be submitted through the Qualtrics form at marriott.utah.edu/summit
 - Video must be submitted as a link using video hosting platforms such as youtube, vimeo, or google drive. Video can be unlisted but link must allow viewer through link alone.

Evaluation

- Judges will include hospitality professionals, academic leaders, and sponsors
- Projects will be evaluated based on the judging criteria

Mentorship & Guidance

- Students **are allowed** to seek mentorship from professors for guidance on their projects and to receive advice from industry professionals, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), or any other hospitality/tourism professionals
- Any mentorship or support must be acknowledged in the project on a “credits and contributors” slide

Conduct

- Participants must adhere to ethical standards and avoid plagiarism
- Any external assistance or AI use must be disclosed

AI Use

- Participants are allowed to use AI for their project; however, **all AI use must be disclosed** on a separate slide with a detailed description of how AI was used and in what slides of the presentation it was used.

Winners

- Winners will be announced during the Hospitality Rising Summit on November 5, 2025

Awards

- 1st place \$2,000
- 2nd place \$1,500
- 3rd place \$1,000

Considerations

- Winners are responsible for completing the required paperwork to receive the cash award through the University of Utah in a timely manner.
 - The forms will be sent to the winners via email following the summit, completed forms need to be emailed to marriott@utah.edu and Isabel.corpus@utah.edu

Resources

Destination Marketing/Manager Organization (DMO) Presentation

What is a DMO?

The article [here](#) provides insight into what a DMO is, its key functions, and areas of focus. It outlines the various activities DMOs engage in to promote and manage tourism. Additionally, you can explore other sources to gain a broader understanding of a DMO's role and responsibilities.

Marketing Campaigns

- Video How to create a Marketing Campaign click [here](#)
- Adobe Comprehensive guide to a [Marketing Campaign](#)

Templates for slide decks and videos.

- [Pitch](#)
- [Canva](#)
- [Microsoft Create](#)

Destination Marketing Campaign [case study](#)

Tutorials

- [Pitch tutorial](#)
- [Canva tutorial](#)
- [Microsoft Create](#)