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WORTH at a Glance:

Comparing the Jay Kemmerer WORTH Institute to Peer Institutions

A 2025 study commissioned by the WORTH Institute surveyed university-based organizations across the United States engaged in outdoor recreation, tourism, hospitality, and agritourism to benchmark their structures, missions, staffing, funding, and programming. With responses from nine institutions, the study identified common challenges—such as financial sustainability and staffing limitations—as well as shared goals in workforce development, community engagement, and applied research. These findings provide a foundational understanding of the field and highlight opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and peer learning among like-minded university programs.

The WORTH Institute stands out among peer institutions for its integrated approach to outdoor recreation and tourism as the only participating organization to explicitly include hospitality as a core mission area as well.

Like many of its peers, WORTH emphasizes applied research, workforce development, and statewide engagement, yet its structure, funding model, and scale reflect both shared challenges and unique opportunities.

Key similarities with peer institutions include:

- A focus on community-based outreach
- Participation in state-level partnerships
- Challenges with staffing and long-term financial sustainability

Notable distinctions of WORTH include:

- New endowment support
- Statewide hospitality training programs
- A higher-than-average number (14) of affiliated faculty

While many of these institutions focus mainly on recreation and tourism, WORTH's inclusion of hospitality positions it as a broader driver of Wyoming's travel economy.

Below is a comparative snapshot based on key dimensions gathered in the survey:

Category	WORTH Institute	Peer Average (8 Orgs)
Mission Areas	Outdoor Rec, Tourism, Hospitality	Outdoor Rec, Tourism, Agritourism
Years in operation	4	22
Carnegie Classification	R1	R1 (majority)
Staff	7 FTE, 14 affiliated faculty	6.4 FTE (average), fewer affiliates
State Engagement	Strong – WOT, WYO Rec, Annual Summits	Strong across most respondents
Self-Sustaining Funding	Not yet self-sustaining	Only 2 report full self-sufficiency
Experiential Learning	Yes – WORTH offers or connects students with non-credit training opportunities and certificates in each mission area	Mixed – most offer experiential learning in tourism, but fewer opportunities exist in other mission areas
Marketing Strategy	Formal marketing plan and agency	Few have formal marketing plans
Sponsored Program Fees	Yes – up to 44.5% indirects	Varies – some charge, others do not



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