

# **GAPABRIDGE: LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER INITIATIVES IN THE EMERGING RSU TECHNOSCAPE AMIDST THE PANDEMIC**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

**W**ith the different breakthroughs surfacing the academic world when it comes to bridging the gaps between and among those who are able and not, it is but timely to consider options that would get things done in accordance with the institution's vision and mission. This serves as a great impetus and challenge to the leaders how inadequacies and obstacles can be addressed through available means. Romblon State University as an institution committed to excellence and service is working towards attaining this goal. With the newly-established office of the Learning Hubs and Language Testing Services, under the Learning Resource Center, this project was actualized. This was initially geared toward addressing the setbacks brought about by pandemic and to extend help to those students who may find learning challenging yet favorable. Considering all the problems besetting the educational landscape nowadays, this project may not be a panacea but we see it as a promising solution to the pressing demand of multifaceted learning.

Through the data gathered from colleges and campuses, it was found out that likelihood of establishing learning hubs was high. The questionnaire consists of the respondents' perception on the learning hub itself, the personnel, the equipment and services and sustainability. It cannot be denied, based on their responses, that this project is not an easy one but quite taxing especially in terms of available computers and internet connectivity. However, based on ocular visit and interview conducted, hope and excitement was prevalent.

Data submitted to the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs revealed that in terms of internet connectivity as a result of rapid assessment from students in the main campus, 45.20% have intermittent connectivity, 44.44% have weak connectivity, and 10.36% have the strong connectivity. Also, few students have the availability of ICT devices, and most of them possess smartphone devices. The data speak that there a little amount of possibility to have online classes. Thus, the university focused on modular modality.

Based on initial interview survey, learners need help from experienced peers and teachers. Self-learning through modular modality is good and it develops independent learning, however, the transition of traditional classrooms to the new distant education is very much challenging to students specifically to new learners. Further, based on the previous forum with students, oftentimes, there is a difficulty on having self-understanding with modules. Narratives from students suggest that some of them are not self-motivated and confident learners. Learners need strong support, encouragement and time to comprehend subjects and concepts new to them. It seems reasonable to have a physical learning environment to increase student's participation in the higher education. Physical learning spaces provide conducive learning environment which is significant to learning process. These learning spaces in the new normal develop collaboration with teachers and learners that promotes valued learning activities.

## **FRAMEWORK**

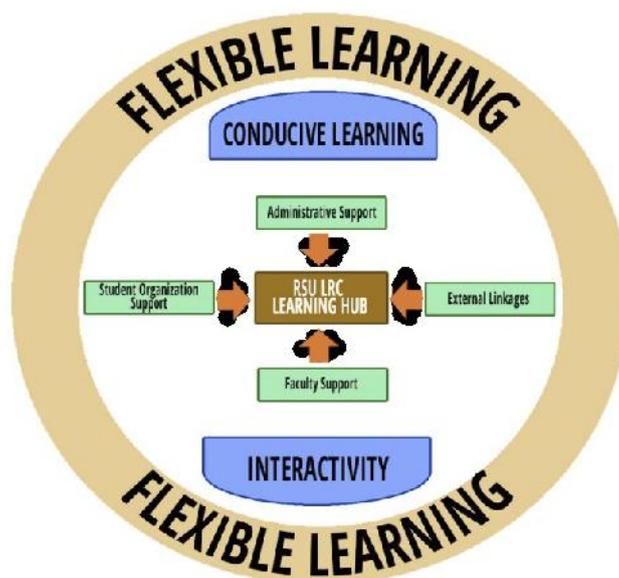
### **a. Administrative support**

The establishment of learning hubs will never be possible without the support of the administration. As a matter of fact, the very idea of this project comes from them. The policies underlying the operations

of learning hubs were anchored from the vision of the institution itself clearly represented by the administration. Financial matters as to how learning hubs will be operationalized are governed by their decisions, not to mention moral support are indeed indispensable in the success of this project.

### **b. Faculty Support**

As important as the role of administration in this unprecedented project, faculty support is also deemed one. They could provide some inputs on how the implementation will be best done to the person in-charge and maintain cordial relationship with them.



Verily, one of the services to be carried out in this project is the interaction between the students and the faculty through tutorial sessions. This activity opens an opportunity for the faculty members to extend assistance to those students who find learning in the new normal somewhat challenging.

### **c. Student Organization Support**

Student leaders serve as the voice of all students in the academe. Any project for the students will also be a great privilege for the student organization to do their pledge. In this undertaking, they will serve as student-designate who will assist the person-in-charge during the implementation of the project. They will also assist for the preparation of reports to be submitted at the end of the month.

### **d. Internal and external linkages**

Looking at the clearer picture of the project, the proponents saw to it that this project is as promising as other projects already established in the institution. This will be possible through strong coordination with concerned units (colleges and campuses) and collaboration or partnership with the community and agencies. Information and Communication Technology Services Center (ICTS) through Engr. Julie F. Fallaria will serve as one of the collaborators and will take charge of the installation and setup of desktop computers and internet connections.

Mentioned above, collaboration with the community and interested agencies is one of the goals of this project. This paves a way for a healthy rapport that will expand this project's reach. Partnership with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) is one of the promising initiatives already carried through and more are still anticipated in the future. Aside from the technologies that we could adapt, effective management and additional support will also be put into account.

**e. Conductive Atmosphere**

Learning best happens in an atmosphere that gives students the feeling of comfort and belongingness. One of the philosophies in education, behaviourism, emphasizes the crucial role of environment for a meaningful learning, since it influences the way students think about the situation they are in. Well-ventilated, lighted and spacious environment will surely provide students with motivation and interest in learning, not to mention the available technologies that would positively change the way they see learning. Indeed, there is no substitute for an environment where students feel they truly belong and deserve.

**f. Interactivity**

The emergence of various network and media underscores the kind of world we should keep up with. Learning hub serves as a place to make learning more meaningful and interactive through the help of technology we have at hand. Rohani and Yazdani (2012) observed that an SNS is a Web 2.0 tool and e-learning occurs through collaboration facilitated by SNSs when computers or mobile devices are used to access learning materials through the Internet.

Similarly, interactivity between and among students and faculty is an important aspect in the learning hub. Here, they can exchange meaningful ideas through academic discussions that would eventually make them more involved.

**FIRST THINGS FIRST: PRELIMINARY STEPS FOR LEARNING HUB ESTABLISHMENT**

The concept of establishing learning hubs was actualized through the concerted efforts of the administration and Learning Resource Center. It envisions to provide students alternative ways to make their learning more meaningful, productive and adaptive to the present situation and beyond. Through the challenges besetting the educational system nowadays, it is but timely to strategize new ways to bridge the gap between the students' capacity and the learning outcomes expected of them. Since colleges and campuses have different needs, resources and means to undertake such endeavor, preliminary survey and ocular visit were conducted. This is to ensure that they have a full grasp of the new project and what they could expect at the end. This project opens new avenue and hope for those who see the current setting a deterrent for their effective learning.



The LRC Team with Ms. Preexcy Tupas, LH Coordinator of Institute of Information Technology.



The LRC Team with Dean Marbeth Fadriquela, and Ms. Charton Sombria LH Coordinator of the College of Business and Accountancy.



The LRC Team with Dr. Alfredo F. Fortu, Dean of College of Engineering and Technology.



The LRC Team with RSU San Andres Campus LH Coordinator



The LRC Team and the Learning Hub Coordinator of RSU San Agustin Campus



The LRC Team with the RSU Calatrava Campus Director, Dr. Leila R. Fabella and Ms. Lucy F. Moscoso, LH Coordinator



Target space of RSU Calatrava Campus Learning Hub



The LRC Team with Mr. Danilo Miñon of RSU Sta Maria Campus

Services offered include but not limited to internet access for their course requirements, typing, printing, tutorial sessions and the like.

### THE LAUNCHING: ONE STEP AWAY FROM REALITY

The interest of the colleges and campuses on the said project was evident based on the preliminary visit and interview. Since the project is unprecedented, apprehensions are always expected. With that, pilot study through the launching of College of Education learning hub served as an important baseline data on what particular measures have to be taken into consideration. Through the guidance of the learning hub coordinator, Ms. Ann Janeth Alba and with the assistance of the student organization headed by Mr. Jhon Rey Rodeo, launching was materialized on February 1, 2021. They invited high university officials including the President herself, Dr. Merian P. Catajay-Mani. Complete documentation was done. The pilot implementation lasted for two weeks and necessary reports were required. It was found out that end users found the project beneficial as evidenced by their evaluation. The team gave full autonomy to the CED learning hub in-charge



Dr. Emelyn R. Villanueva, Vice President for Academic Affairs, during the launching of the College of Education Learning Hubs.



Dr. Merian P. Catajay-Mani, Romblon State University President, gracing the CED Learning Hubs Launching.





since the idea was conceptualized even before the formal establishment of Learning hub office in the university.

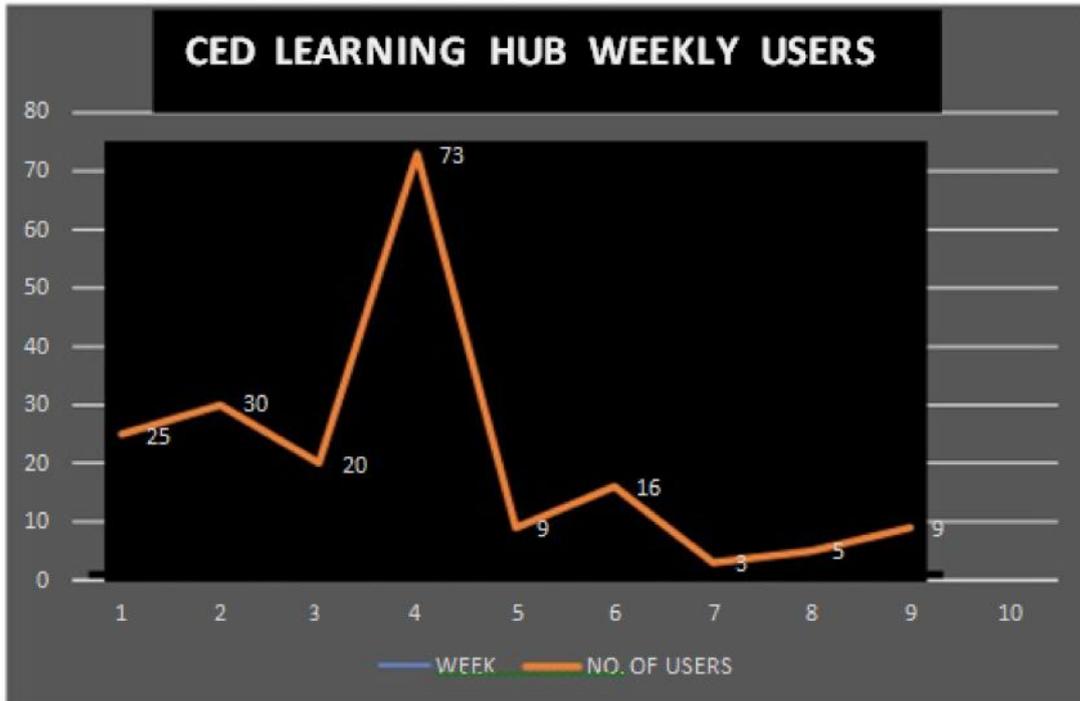
The budget spent for this undertaking came from CEDSO fund since no available fund from the LRC was allocated when the start-up and launching were materialized. The establishment of CED Learning Hub was conceptualized even before the office for Learning Hubs and Language Testing Services. Below is the breakdown of all the expenses incurred based on the report submitted by CEDSO to the office.

#### a. Preliminary Requirements and Items Needed for Start-up

PARTICULARS (Named based from PR)	COST
For CED Learning Hub	P 307,100.00
For Modular Printing	P 299,500.00
For Internet Connectivity	P 10,000.00
Book Shelves	P 40,400.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>P 657,000.00</b>

#### b. Launching Expenses

PARTICULARS	COST
Meals	P 7,075.00
Utensils	P 680.00
Cleaning Tools	P 100.00
Decorations and beautification	P 4,900.00
Office supplies	P 750.00
Gasoline/Travel	P 750.00
Certificates	P 720.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>P 14,475.00</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>P 671,475.00</b>



Shown in the graph above is the number of CED Learning Hub users in 9 weeks of implementation. It clearly shows that the number of users per week is fluctuating due to some reasons mainly based on their individual needs. Week 4 has the highest number of users due to the fact that the students had to print their modules for the first cluster.

### AS A START-UP

The findings from the launching of CED learning hub may be used as a springboard by other colleges and campuses. Being so, they may start with their own learning hubs and shall:

- coordinate with the Office for learning hubs before the implementation
- prepare necessary inventory of the available equipment such as computers, printers, chairs, and other related things such as internet connectivity, air conditioner, coupon bonds, etc.
- submit a proposal to the office. Timeline of activities and specific services or deliverables should also be well-reflected
- adopt the general policies and guidelines formulated or modify if necessary (to consider the context)
- prepare complete documentation of the project from launching to the actual implementation
- submit reports of the progress (for the first week) after the launching and periodically

For a successful implementation, needed documents include but not limited to:

- a proposal showing the rationale, objectives, timeline or Gantt chart showing your deliverables for specified time, budget

- communication letters (office to office transactions, invitations, etc.)
- narrative report with attachments (documentations, log in and log out scheme (attendance), evaluation forms.

### **THE TARGETS: PRESENT MEETS THE FUTURE**

Coordination with respective campuses and colleges and other prospective partner-agencies were continuously done to ensure that the project would flourish despite the threatening situation. In fact, on March 8 and March 25, 2021, the office arranged a meeting with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) for viable partnership. This paved a way for LRC to know more about what DICT could offer and eventually extend as support for the said project. One of the things discussed was the establishment of Tech4Ed Center for each learning hub. This undertaking gives the learning hub end users opportunity to explore more ways to enhance their learning through different educational sites offered by DICT. Moreover, the same agency offers free training for center managers who will serve as general overseers for each learning hub. Center Manager Training (CMT) will be conducted on April 28, 2021 which purports to discuss the important roles of the assigned center manager during the implementation of the project.



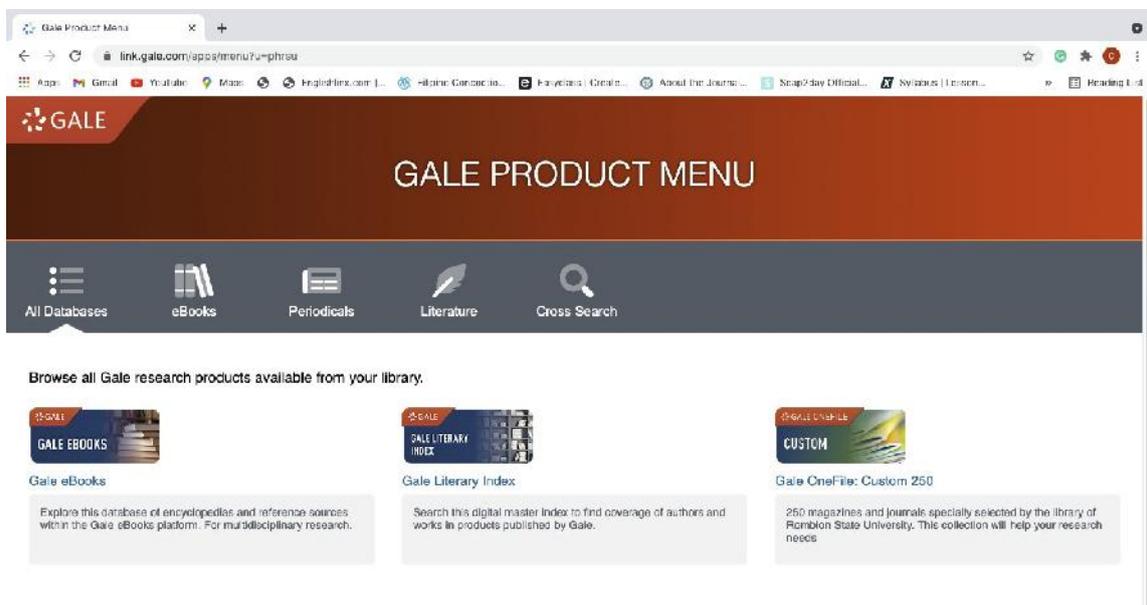
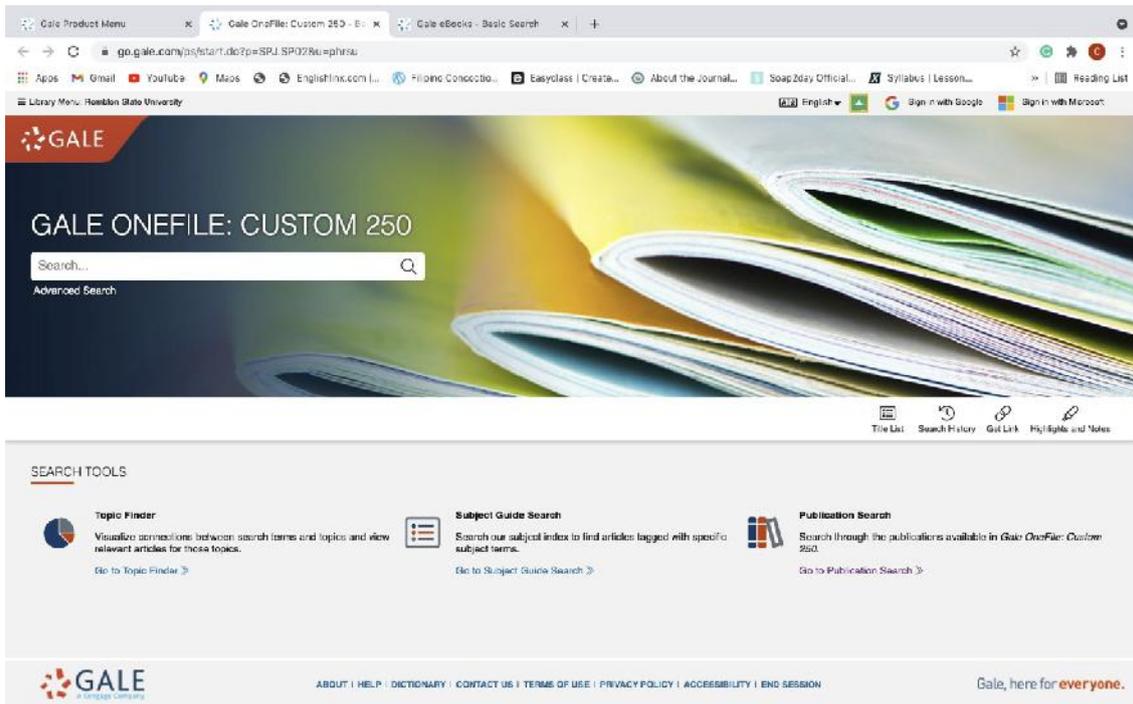
March 8, 2021. RSU Learning Hubs and DICT Tech4ED Centers meeting and collaborations



March 25, 2021, Meeting and Finalization of MOA between RSU LRC Learning Hubs and DICT Tech4Ed Centers

The Learning Resource Center is unwavering in its goal to maximize its resources through external linkages. In fact, e-resources are now at hand for incorporation in learning hubs once the situation becomes better. These resources are also unprecedented in the university and more are still anticipated in the coming months.

The office is hopeful that this endeavor will give more promising ways toward a more meaningful flexible learning and this is just a start.



Romblon State University Learning Resource Center Gale Subscriptions. Electronic resources are now accessible to both faculty and students in and off university.

**PROPOSED BUDGETARY REQUIREMENTS**

PARTICULARS		COST
Internet cable & Labor	10,000	10,000
Router	2,500	2,500
Desktop computers	5 DCs X 25,000	125,000
Internet Subscription	6,000 X 12	72,000
Training/Maintenance/Monitoring	20,000/YEAR	20,000
JO/Staff	320/DAY X 22 X 12	84,480
<b>Total</b>		<b>313,980/ Learning Hub</b>

**University Learning Hubs and Tech <sup>4</sup>ed centers**

No.	Established Learning Hubs	Date of Establishment	Status
1.	CED Learning Hub and Tech4Ed Center	February 1, 2021	FullyOperational
2.	CET Learning Hub andTech4Ed Center	June 29, 2021	For Set Up
3.	IIT Learning Hub and Tech4Ed Center	June 29, 2021	For Set Up
4.	RSU Cajidiocan Learning Huband Tech4Ed Center	June 29, 2021	FullyOperational
5.	RSU LRC Learning Hub and Tech4Ed Center	June 29, 2021	FullyOperational