



Project Proposal: ConnectIT: A Bridge through the Digital Divide

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Project Summary:

The "ConnectIT" project aims to bridge the digital gap among students by providing them with the necessary tools and resources for successful learning. This initiative focuses on equipping a cohort of students in an Online Education Resource (OER) friendly program with iPads that have 5G connectivity. This ensure students have the class materials needed for the course on the first day of instruction, while 5G will provide students with internet connectivity. The project encompasses a comprehensive approach, including faculty professional development and student orientation to ensure that students are prepared to use ConnectIT tool kit.

Project Objectives:

- Reduce the digital divide among students by providing them with essential resources, access to online textbooks, and internet connection.
- Increase access to high-quality education by offering iPads with 5G connectivity, ADA compliance, and multilingual support to enhance learning experiences.
- Improve the educational outcomes and success rates of students in the OER program by offering comprehensive support and resources.
- Enhance faculty's ability to deliver effective online education through specialized training and resources.
- Measure the project's impact by tracking student outcomes and evaluating the effectiveness of the provided resources.

Project Description:

The ConnectIT addresses unequal access to technology, which has become even more significant recently with the shift towards online education. This project will target a specific cohort of students enrolled in an OER-friendly program that can be effectively measured for outcomes. The core components of the project include:

1. Provision of Managed iPads:

Students in the selected program will be provided with managed iPads. These iPads will have the following features:

- 5G connectivity to ensure seamless internet access.
- Pre-installed Canvas and OER software for easy access to course materials.
- Accessibility features, making them ADA compliant and usable in multiple languages.

2. Faculty Professional Development:

To enhance the faculty's ability to teach effectively via iPads, a specialized training program titled "ConnectIT - Teaching via an iPad" will be developed. Faculty members participating in this program will gain the skills and knowledge required to provide high-quality online education.

3. Student Orientation:

All participating students will undergo a mandatory one-hour introductory class, equipping them with the necessary skills to use the iPads effectively. This orientation will ensure that students are well-prepared for their online classes and can make the most of the provided resources.

4. Outcome Measurement:

The project will employ a comprehensive outcome measurement system to track the impact of the initiative. This will include monitoring student performance, engagement, and feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of the iPads, faculty training, and student orientation.

Budget & Resources:

The budget for the ConnectIT project will include the following components:

- Procurement of iPads with 5G connectivity and software licenses.
- Development of the "Teaching via an iPad" training program for faculty. (In house)
- Student orientation materials and resources. (in house)
- Monitoring and evaluation tools for tracking outcomes. (In house)

Timeline:

The project is planned to be implemented over the course of one academic year. The timeline will be structured as follows:

- Procurement and setup of iPads: Months 1-3. (Jan-March)

- Development and implementation of faculty training: Months 3-4. (March/April)
- Student orientation sessions: Months 5-8 (May/June Summer or Aug Fall).
- Ongoing outcome measurement and evaluation: Throughout the academic year, with review gates every 8 weeks, project program outcome review each term.

Conclusion:

The ConnectIT project is a comprehensive initiative that aims to provide students in OER programs with the necessary tools, including an internet connection and resources, to succeed in the online learning environment. By addressing the digital divide through innovation, technology, faculty training, and student orientation, this project has the potential to significantly improve the educational outcomes of participating students. We seek support and funding for this project to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to excel in their educational journey and bridge the digital divide through ConnectIT.

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