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Creating a launchpad for innovation: A study on the potential impact of an incubation center at Kalinga State University

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Abstract

This research aims to find out the potential impact of establishing an incubation center at Kalinga State University. Using a survey instrument that collected the insights of students, faculty, staff, and alumni, the research revealed a strong interest in entrepreneurial initiatives among the participants. Although some obstacles were highlighted, such as insufficient funding, limitations in business expertise, and inadequate mentorship from industry experts, the proposed incubation center has the potential to lessen these obstacles by providing essential resources, mentorship, and linkages. In order to achieve this, it is recommended that the incubation center should be established with its own mission and vision, qualified university officials should be designated, a business plan should be created, a diverse source of income should be secured, mentorship and networking programs should be provided, seminars and workshops should be intensified, and a conducive workplace should be made available.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Incubation, Innovation, University.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Kalinga State University's College of Entrepreneurship, Tourism, and Hospitality Management is essential for fostering innovation and enhancing economic development in the locality. The university endeavors to conduct research across various sectors of business management and entrepreneurship, emphasizing the improvement of instructional quality, increased productivity, and the safeguarding of livelihood initiatives.

Incubation centers have emerged as significant instruments for supporting innovation and entrepreneurship within universities globally [1]. Originating in the United States during the 1950s, these centers have undergone considerable evolution, adapting to the dynamic economic and technological environments. The incubation centers provide startups with an advantage over those who have not been exposed to the same resources, as they offer access to crucial resources such as

mentorship and networking opportunities. This collaborative environment is expected to cultivate the minds of students and other beneficiaries, enabling them to become successful entrepreneurs and contribute to the province's economic success.

In the Philippines, the concept of university-based incubation centers is relatively new. Recently, there has been a remarkable increase in the drive to promote entrepreneurship and innovation among students and faculty. These facilities offer a range of services, including mentoring, capital, and working environments, focused on advancing the development and success of emerging enterprises.

This research aligns with the college's mandate to enhance the quality of instruction and strengthen the development of entrepreneurial skills among students. By establishing an incubation center, KSU can position itself as a leading university in the promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship. This initiative is consistent with the state's goal of fostering a knowledge-oriented economy and advancing an inventive atmosphere.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

This study aims to assess, analyze, and evaluate the current entrepreneurial ecosystem and the potential benefits of an incubation center at KSU. It seeks to develop recommendations for the establishment and operation of the incubation center.

2. Review of Literature

The interplay between the university and industry is widely accepted as important, because it puts into motion the sharing of expertise which hastens the instigation of new technologies and solutions into the economic world [2]. This cooperation gives rise to an environment that provides an atmosphere for learners to add practical skills, while businesses benefit from innovative ideas and creative processes to respond to challenges [3]. This vigorous interchange furnishes learners the ability to address the complicated status of the present labor market, and it revitalizes economic development by setting up a uninterrupted supply of talented entrepreneurs equipped with the knowledge and skills to respond to the everchanging hurdles in the society. These ingenuity results in producing incubators and accelerators that supply vital resources to nestling business entities, smoothing the way to achieve success in a highly competitive market. The Stanford University model, also known as the "Stanford Model," represents an efficient in campus incubation center [4]. Stanford University has played an important role in the development of Silicon Valley, paving way for the appearance of several technology startups that have basically reshaped several business entities. European institutions, including Cambridge University and Oxford University, have also set up leading incubation centers [5]. These centers have remarkably provided scaling up of technological hubs in cities like Cambridge and Oxford. These reputable universities provided vital resources and mentorship to new and aspiring entrepreneurs and have encouraged an innovative environment that encourages the interplay between universities and the industry players [6].

A number of previous studies have explained the favorable impact of incubation centers on student entrepreneurship. These centers provide students with the indispensable skills, knowledge, and resources necessary for the initiation of successful enterprises. By providing guidance, training, and investors, incubation centers were found to increase the possibility of success for student business ventures [7]. Additionally, incubation centers promote a collaborative environment where students can participate with friends, experts and practitioners with the same entrepreneurial ambitions, thereby raising their entrepreneurial pursuits. This encouraging environment furthers innovation and helps the students in obtaining essential soft skills, such as teamwork and communication, which are critical in coursing through the difficulties of entrepreneurship in today's competitive market [8]. The establishment of incubation centers has brought about a remarkable rise in entrepreneurial initiatives in universities and colleges, influencing students to transform their innovative ideas into profitable business ventures. Mentorship and coaching are fundamental to the success of incubation centers. Mentors and coaches provide entrepreneurs with direction, aid, and crucial advice, easing their way through the intricacies connected with the initiation and administration of a business venture. These initiatives not only supply practical insights but also foster a network of associations that can ease access to financial assistance, partnerships, and vital resources needed for entrepreneurial success. The strengthening of interpersonal relationships between mentors and mentees gives rise to a climate of confidence and collaboration, which in turn empowers entrepreneurs to reinforce their trust and calibrate their business strategies through the sharing of experiences and knowledge [9].

Moreover, these centers can give assistance to entrepreneurs in making business plans and pitch presentations to outsource financial support from outside the university. The center will not only aid in the financial stability of startups but also provide the owners with the essential skills and networks to succeed in a very competitive world of entrepreneurship [10]. The provision of mentorship and guidance from experienced industry experts within these incubation centers further strengthens the foundation of new start-ups by making an environment that is amiable to innovation and expansion [11]. This overarching network not only improves the likelihood of startup success but also provides a vigorous environment that fosters networking and knowledge dissemination among entrepreneurs. This entrepreneurship environment eventually gives rise to the establishment of more work opportunities and economic development, as booming startups expand their businesses and launch innovative products and services to the marketplace [12].

Strong networks can facilitate startups in reaching innovative markets, getting financial assistance, and creating linkages. The creation of a large network not only enhances appearance but also encourages an ecosystem of shared knowledge and resources, which can be very important in conquering the intricacies met by start-ups. Such linkages may produce very valuable mentorship opportunities, wherein industry experts share their knowledge and experiences that can substantially influence a startup's developmental stage.

3. Methodology

The research used quantitative methodology to find patterns in the data presented and enable the researcher to make conclusions and recommendations. To ensure a thorough understanding of the needs and expectations in the establishment of an incubation center at KSU, a diverse group of individuals was selected as participants in the study. Among the diverse groups of participants are Kalinga State University's faculty and staff, students, and alumni who have either an interest or experience in business. This diversity is hoped to ensure that a variety of insights and perspectives are obtained. A structured questionnaire, adapted from a previous study entitled "UNIVERSITY BUSINESS INCUBATORS AND STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS: IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS" by [Korejo, et al. \[13\]](#).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Profile of the Participants

4.1.1. Current affiliation with Kalinga State University

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of respondents by their status within the university, such as students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

Current affiliation with Kalinga State university

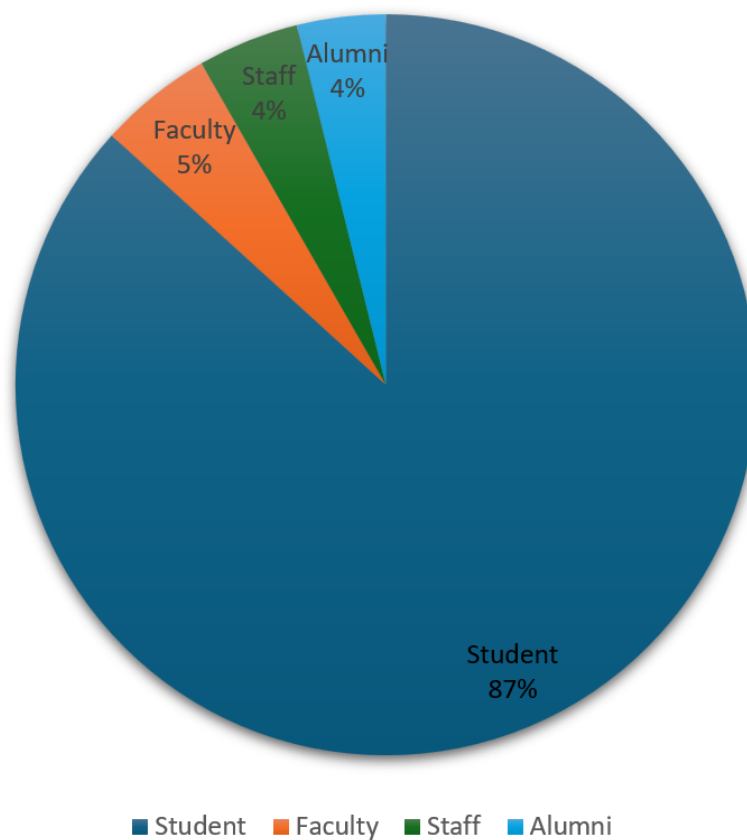


Figure 1.
Respondents' Current affiliation with Kalinga State University.

The strong participation of students signifies a high level of interest from the group of students (157 or 87%) in this project. This indication may mean a large pool of future entrepreneurs or innovators who could greatly benefit from the resources and support provided by an incubation center. The research involves nine faculty members who shared their views as participants, and their inputs are very important, as they provide in-depth knowledge that can serve as a guideline for the well-thought-out management and administration of the incubation center's undertakings. Additionally, eight KSU staff members, categorized as non-teaching personnel, also took part in the study, supplying vital administrative and operational insights that are important for the successful implementation of the incubation center's plans and projects, along with seven KSU alumni who have pursued different career paths, sharing their real-life experiences and lessons learned, which can serve as a fundamental basis for both present and future beneficiaries of the incubation programs.

4.1.2. Current Level of Study

The following graph presents the educational attainment of the respondents, categorized by college level, bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctorate degree. This information provides valuable insight into the academic background of the study participants.

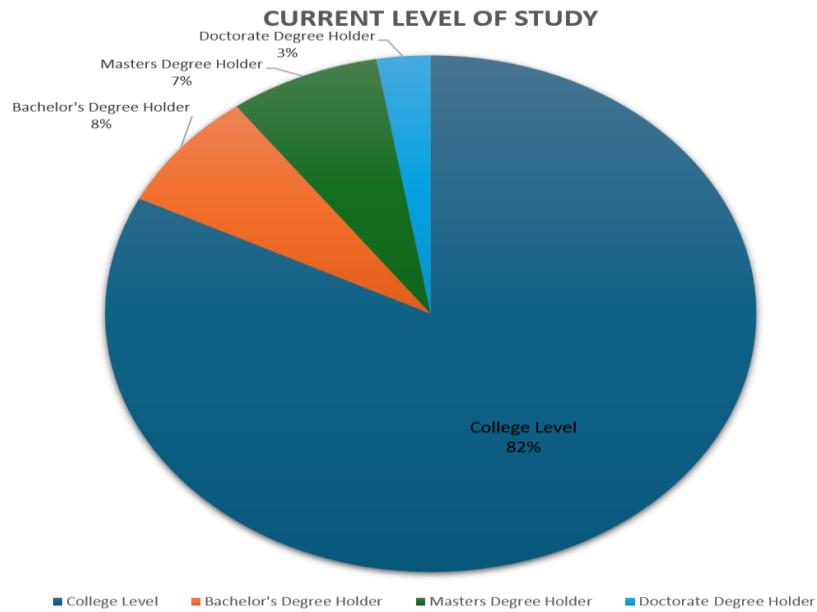


Figure 2.
Respondents' current level of study.

It can be seen from the chart that there are 154 participants who have reached college level. This group consists mostly of people who have either completed their degrees or are currently enrolled in a tertiary school. Considering their current academic situation, these participants would significantly benefit from the incubation center's strong academic resources and support. Furthermore, 14 participants are holders of a Bachelor's degree. The incubation center can offer these graduates important networking opportunities, enhancing interactions with industry experts and practitioners [14]. Additionally, the center's resources can provide critical support in the early stages of the startup's development, thus incorporating academic learning and practical experience [15]. The 14 participants who hold Master's degrees are likely to have acquired technical knowledge and experience. They possess profound abilities that can significantly improve the functionality of the incubation center. Their skillfulness can foster concerted efforts that result in projects that are innovative and state-of-the-art. Finally, five participants possess Doctorate degrees. These participants provide the wisdom and specialized knowledge that are indispensable to the incubation center's innovation environment [16].

4.1.3. Years of Entrepreneurial Experience

The table below shows the breakdown of respondents by their years of entrepreneurial experience, categorized into Less than 5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and 15 years and above.

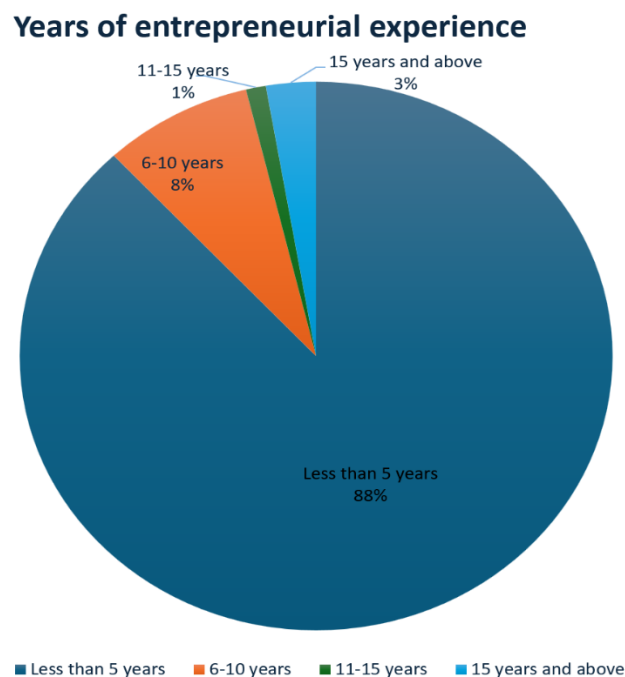


Figure 3.
Respondents' years of entrepreneurial experience.

A large number of entrepreneurs, specifically 162 individuals, have less than five years of experience in their respective areas. This emphasizes the necessity for strong support systems customized for new entrepreneurs. On the contrary, a smaller group of 15 entrepreneurs holds between 6 to 10 years of experience. This group provides a distinct opportunity to execute highly developed programs that will serve their changing needs. Enhanced mentorship programs, specialized training workshops, and access to essential resources could noticeably improve their entrepreneurial endeavors, helping them successfully expand their businesses.

Moreover, only two participants possess between 11 to 15 years of experience, signifying a dearth of experienced entrepreneurs who can mentor or advise within the community. This scarce representation emphasizes the need for strategic programs bridge the gap between new and experienced professionals who can give advice and provide new entrepreneurs mentorship [17].

Finally, just five participants have more than 15 years of experience. Despite this number, this group presents substantial potential as valuable resources for incubation centers and linkages. Their immense expertise and industry experience could greatly benefit both new and thriving entrepreneurs.

4.2. Current Entrepreneurial Ecosystem at Kalinga State University

4.2.1. Entrepreneurial Interest and Activity

Table 1 describes the entrepreneurial interest and activity of respondents at Kalinga State University (KSU). It presents the mean scores of responses to six statements related to entrepreneurial engagement, along with interpretations of those scores.

Table 1.
Entrepreneurial interest and activity.

Entrepreneurial Interest and Activity	Mean	Interpretation
1. I have a strong interest in starting my own business.	4.03	Great Extent
2. I have a business idea that I would like to pursue.	3.90	Great Extent
3. I have taken courses or workshops on entrepreneurship.	3.77	Great Extent
4. I have sought advice or mentorship from entrepreneurs or business professionals.	3.76	Great Extent
5. I have participated in business competitions or hackathons.	3.63	Great Extent
6. I have received support from KSU in pursuing my entrepreneurial endeavors.	3.73	Great Extent
	3.80	Great Extent

The existence of many aspiring entrepreneurs is a pivotal asset for the incubation center, as it displays their inclination to take part in entrepreneurial ventures [18]. Moreover, the strong keenness to join seminars, conferences, and seek mentorship shows an active mindset among potential entrepreneurs. This commitment to obtain essential knowledge and guidance indicates a community that perceives the intricacies of starting and keeping a business running. It highlights their commitment to establishing the vital skills and abilities, which is important for successfully traversing the entrepreneurial landscape. This forward-thinking attitude lays a strong foundation for the incubation center to develop, as it is consistent with the center's mission to support and foster new businesses.

Table 2.
Challenges faced by student entrepreneurs.

Challenges faced by student entrepreneurs	Mean	Interpretation
1. Lack of funding	4.07	Great Extent
2. Lack of business knowledge and skills	3.92	Great Extent
3. Lack of time and resources	3.94	Great Extent
4. Difficulty in balancing academics and entrepreneurship	3.95	Great Extent
5. Lack of support from faculty and staff	3.75	Great Extent
6. Difficulty in accessing mentorship and networking opportunities	3.98	Moderate Extent
	3.935	Great Extent

4.2.2. Challenges Faced by Student Entrepreneurs

Table 2 describes the challenges faced by student entrepreneurs, based on a survey or study.

The data reveals a concerning situation, where participants consistently indicated a "Great Extent" of agreement regarding various obstacles, signaling a considerable lineup of problems that aspiring entrepreneurs face within the university. The noticeable agreement regarding the "Lack of funding" highlights a significant hurdle for student entrepreneurs. This implies that there is a shortage of accessible monetary support needed to begin and sustain student startups [19].

Contributory factors to this environment consist of inadequate scholarships and grants customized for entrepreneurial startups, as well as problems in obtaining loans due to strict lending requirements or a lack of financial literacy among students [20]. Additionally, the agreement regarding the "lack of business knowledge and skills" emphasizes a crucial need for improved academic and training programs. The success of an entrepreneur relies upon the areas of marketing, finance, and legal compliance. However, the present curriculum offered by the programs at Kalinga State University may not provide students with the necessary skills needed to successfully start and maintain a business [21].

Furthermore, their comments concerning "Lack of time and resources" and "Difficulty in balancing academics and entrepreneurship" emphasize a serious problem. It may mean that entrepreneurs are finding it hard to balance their studies and starting up a new business venture, which may be associated with the current infrastructure that does not necessarily provide the required assistance to support the dual responsibility [22].

The "Difficulty in accessing mentorship and networking opportunities" and the "Lack of support from faculty and staff" indicate that there is an absence of a structured system of support for entrepreneurship students. The lack of established partnerships and networks with industry experts and established entrepreneurs, coupled with limited interaction with their instructors, may be the primary reason for the inadequate level of participation.

Table 3.

Existing support systems and resources.

Existing Support Systems and Resources	Mean	Interpretation
1. Entrepreneurship courses and workshops	2.92	Moderate Extent
2. Mentorship and coaching programs	2.90	Moderate Extent
3. Access to funding and financing opportunities	1.87	Low Extent
4. Incubation and acceleration programs	1.81	Low Extent
5. Networking and collaboration opportunities	2.89	Moderate Extent
6. Technical and administrative support	2.84	Moderate Extent
	2.92	Moderate Extent

4.2.3. Existing Support Systems and Resources

Table 3 describes respondents' perceptions of the availability and extent of existing support systems and resources for entrepreneurship. It shows the mean scores for six different types of support, along with an interpretation of those scores.

The "Moderate Extent" agreement in Entrepreneurship Courses and Workshops suggests some availability of educational resources on entrepreneurship, such as instructional materials developed by KSU faculty, books and references from the library, and other IEC materials on entrepreneurship. However, this could be increased or customized to prioritize specific student needs. Similar to courses, the "Moderate Extent" rating in Mentorship and Coaching Programs indicates some availability of mentorship, although it is limited in breadth and accessibility.

The "Moderate Extent" in Networking and Collaboration Opportunities suggests some existing programs for students to link with other students or prospective partners, but these might need strengthening. Currently, networking opportunities are mostly facilitated through conferences and symposia, which may not fully engage students or cultivate organic connections. Technical and Administrative Support: "Moderate Extent" indicates some access to resources like equipment or administrative assistance, but these might be limited or unorganized. The "Low Extent" agreement in Access to Funding and Financing Opportunities signifies an evident gap in financial support for student undertakings. This is a critical area for the incubation center to address.

Incubation and Acceleration Programs that were rated as "Low Extent" imply that there may be a lack of organized activities that provide comprehensive encouragement and guidance to student entrepreneurs, of which the establishment of an incubation center is seen to have an important impact in this area.

4.3. Potential Benefits of an Incubation Center in KSU

4.3.1. Impact on Students

Table 4 describes students' perceptions of the potential impact of an incubation center on their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Table 3.

Impact on Students.

Impact on students	Mean	Interpretation
1. An incubation center would provide valuable mentorship and guidance to student entrepreneurs.	4.28	Very great extent
2. An incubation center would help students develop essential entrepreneurial skills.	4.30	Very great extent
3. An incubation center would increase the likelihood of student startups succeeding.	4.27	Very great extent
4. An incubation center would foster a culture of innovation and creativity among students.	4.24	Very great extent
5. An incubation center would provide opportunities for students to network with industry professionals.	4.28	Very great extent
	4.27	Very great extent

The importance of the incubation center for student entrepreneurs is reflected in the strong agreement regarding the creation of an Enhanced Skills and Mentorship program in the survey questionnaire. An incubation center, aside from being the home of innovators, will also serve as an avenue for experts to offer mentorship to beginners.

4.3.2. Impact on the Local Community

Table 5 describes respondents' perceptions of the potential impact of establishing an incubation center on the local community. It presents the mean scores of responses to five statements, each related to a different aspect of community impact.

Table 4.

Impact on the local community.

Impact on the Local Community	Mean	Interpretation
1. An incubation center would stimulate economic growth in the local community.	4.24	Very Great Extent
2. An incubation center would create jobs in the local community.	4.30	Very Great Extent
3. An incubation center would attract investment to the local community.	4.26	Very Great Extent
4. An incubation center would foster innovation and technological advancement in the local community.	4.23	Very Great Extent
5. An incubation center would contribute to the overall development of the region.	4.28	Very Great Extent
	4.26	Very Great Extent

The strong agreement on the premise, "An incubation center would boost economic growth in the local community," emphasizes the major impact such a center can have on revitalizing and invigorating the local economy. By supporting new businesses, the incubation center acts as a jump starter for entrepreneurial activity, which not only augments marketability but also upgrades the general economic environment of the community [23]. Moreover, the strong support for the claim, "An incubation center would create jobs in the local community," underscores the center's propensity to bring forth direct job opportunities. By offering important resources, mentorship, and help to startups, the incubation center can stimulate the development of new businesses, which eventually results in job creation covering different industries [24]. Finally, the strong agreement with the idea that "An incubation center would promote innovation and technological progress in the local community" shows that they have the potential to become a hub for boosting creativity and encouraging tech development.

4.3.3. Job Creation, Economic Development, and Innovation

Table 6 describes respondents' perceptions of the potential impact of establishing an incubation center on job creation, economic development, and innovation.

Table 5.

Impact on Job Creation, Economic Development and Innovation.

Impact on job creation, economic development, and innovation	Mean	Interpretation
1. An incubation center would lead to the creation of new businesses.	4.30	Very great extent
2. An incubation center would contribute to job creation in the region.	4.33	Very great extent
3. An incubation center would stimulate economic growth in the region.	4.28	Very great extent
4. An incubation center would promote innovation and technological advancement.	4.20	Very great extent
5. An incubation center would attract talent to the region.	4.29	Very great extent
	4.28	Very great extent

The study conducted has disclosed remarkable eagerness and support from the university community for creating an incubation center. The results from the survey among participants at Kalinga State University show strong agreement, with a vast majority convinced that such a center would be pivotal for generating jobs. The incubation center is anticipated to spark the creation of new businesses, which would directly improve job opportunities in the area, resolve local economic issues, and provide opportunities for career growth. Additionally, the incubation center is set to boost economic development.

5. Recommendation

1. Establish an officially organized university incubation center with its own mission and vision.
2. Designate qualified university officials who have a background in business administration and entrepreneurship to oversee the center's day-to-day operations.
3. Seek and secure a diversified source of financial resources, such as the government, business partners, non-governmental organizations, and foundations.
4. Develop an intensive mentorship program that connects entrepreneurship students with experienced mentors who can provide guidance and linkages to the industry.
5. Implement a variety of entrepreneurship education projects such as seminars, workshops, symposiums, and special courses to help students gain the knowledge and skills needed.
6. Provide a conducive workspace equipped with high-speed internet access, meeting facilities, and other requisite amenities.
7. Support students in the pursuit of funding through grants, loans, and angel investors.
8. Organize networking events and establish connections among students, industry experts, prospective investors, and alumni.
9. Establish a systematic approach for the ongoing evaluation of the center's performance and overall impact.
10. Collect and analyze data pertaining to the number of startups initiated, employment generation, and economic repercussions.

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