|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| . | MemoFrom the office of the…Vice-President (Administration) |
| To: | SRA Members and Committee Chairs |
| From: | Graeme Noble, Vice-President (Administration)Negar Asli, Horizons Conference Coordinator |
| Subject: | Rescind **Operating Policy - MSU Horizons** |
| Date: | January 10th, 2020 |

### Introduction

Dear Members of the Assembly,

As I’m sure you’re all aware, this year has not only brought with it a number of unique temporary challenges, but also several longer-term issues. In response, the pandemic has completely reshaped how we address the delivery of various MSU Services for the student body. With large in-person gatherings largely off the table for the foreseeable future, MSU events—particularly its conferences—have been faced with significant demands to readjust this work to any potential online alternatives.

One such adaptation came about through the MSU Horizons webinar series and online sessions as a partial substitute for its conference component. Though this was only originally introduced as a passion project on the part of the Coordinator, ongoing discussions about the Service demonstrate a need to pivot its operations to better suit the demands of a transitioning environment.

Moreover, Horizons Coordinators in recent years have taken a combined approach alongside the Spark Coordinator to help create a more holistic first-year orientation experience between the Services. MSU Horizons and MSU Spark serve many of the same purposes for the McMaster community such as connecting students with upper year mentors, welcoming students into the Hamilton community, and providing students with the skills needed to succeed in their first-year endeavours at McMaster. In recognition and celebration of this complementary relationship, in tandem with other directions taken by analogous services during this time (e.g., Welcome Week), the following proposal has been established.

### Proposal

##### Combine MSU Horizons & MSU Spark

Through thorough consultation between the Vice-President (Administration), the Spark Coordinator, and the Horizons Coordinator, we have outlined key tasks and responsibilities to be integrated into the combined Service. This involves the creation of an MSU Spark webinar series throughout the summer months to supplant and improve upon the project from this past summer. The goal is to have these webinars during a crucial time when students are making, or have already made, decisions about where they intend to go for university and provide them with one of their first touch-points at McMaster.

##### Create MSU Spark Assistant Director Role

With the addition of new responsibilities, as well as in acknowledgement of the tremendous duties performed by the Volunteer Coordinators for both Services on a regular basis, these positions have been combined to form a paid position.

### Rationale

##### Combine MSU Horizons & MSU Spark

MSU Horizons and MSU Spark have long served as the pillars of the MSU’s orientation experience for incoming students at McMaster. However, their collaborations have often only ever resulted from an informal understanding that they serve similar purposes and demographics. Now, with the drastic reduction in MSU Horizons Programming, the consistency of programming and communication between the two aspects has become a feasible merger under a unified mandate. The key component of MSU Horizons that stood out from MSU Spark was the in-person component of 3-day conference: an element which is now no longer possible for the foreseeable future. Additionally, with the drastic move to online service delivery, this change will better reflect the operations of the MSU overall, while stream-lining orientation for first-year students.

##### Create MSU Spark Assistant Director Role

This added paid staff position allows for the maintenance of concurrent responsibilities throughout the year without causing any undue burden to the Spark Coordinator, given how their positional responsibilities have increased. Their role will serve as a big support for the transitional programming during the summer, as well as for volunteer hiring and coordination throughout the year. Financially speaking, this also serves as a viable option given the available funds for reallocation following the removal of the Horizons Coordinator and any additional expenses the Service maintained during an online setting.

### Summary

Understandably, this change isn’t one to be taken lightly. The rescindment of a Service often represents the conclusion of a cycle: a history of student passion and drive to promote community across McMaster. That said, in two-years’ time after the policy renewal buffer has lapsed, when many of us have transitioned beyond the MSU and campus once again resumes its conference-like events, I encourage folks to re-evaluate this structure and the resources/structure required to host Horizons once again. MSU Horizons has had a huge impact on the Hamilton and McMaster community where, year after year, we see students meet their long-life friends and mentors through this service and inspired to give back to the community throughout their undergraduate degrees and beyond. It has always created a space for students to call McMaster their home and set them up for success in the future. The passion for this Service has been established with such love and such dedication within our community and we hope that, for the time being, this can be channeled through MSU Spark. Therefore, while these changes may seem permanent with our short terms in the Union, I can assure you that this proposal can only account for the temporary needs of students during these unprecedented times, but addresses necessary Service alterations, nonetheless.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns prior to the meeting.

Kind regards,



**Graeme Noble**

Vice-President (Administration) & Chief Administrative Officer

McMaster Students Union

vpadmin@msu.mcmaster.ca

**Negar Asli**

Horizons Conference Coordinator & Marketing & Communications Assistant

McMaster Students Union

mca@msu.mcmaster.ca