

Year Plan

MSU Spark

Director

Mitchell German

2020–2021

 

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# Table of Contents

[Table of Contents 2](#_Toc75028922)

[Introduction 3](#_Toc75028923)

[Vision for MSU Spark 5](#_Toc75028924)

[Projects/Events 11](#_Toc75028925)

[Continuous Activities 11](#_Toc75028926)

[Repeating Projects/Events 11](#_Toc75028927)

[Annual Projects/Events 13](#_Toc75028928)

[Other Projects/Events 17](#_Toc75028929)

[Project/Events Timeline 18](#_Toc75028930)

[Spring/Summer Term 18](#_Toc75028931)

[Fall Term 21](#_Toc75028932)

[Winter Term 23](#_Toc75028933)

[Finances & Equipment 25](#_Toc75028934)

[Budget Projection 25](#_Toc75028935)

[Inventory 25](#_Toc75028936)

[Promotions 27](#_Toc75028937)

[Service Webpage 27](#_Toc75028938)

[Social Media 27](#_Toc75028939)

[Merchandise & Apparel 29](#_Toc75028940)

[Contacts 29](#_Toc75028941)

[Onboarding & Administration 31](#_Toc75028942)

[Hiring 31](#_Toc75028943)

[Part-Time Manager(s) 31](#_Toc75028944)

[Executives 31](#_Toc75028945)

[Volunteers 32](#_Toc75028946)

[Training 33](#_Toc75028947)

[Part-Time Manager(s) 33](#_Toc75028948)

[Executives 34](#_Toc75028949)

[Volunteers 36](#_Toc75028950)

[Year Plan 37](#_Toc75028951)

[Executives 37](#_Toc75028952)

[Reports 37](#_Toc75028953)

[Miscellaneous 38](#_Toc75028955)

[Appendix 39](#_Toc75028956)

[A. Full Contact List 39](#_Toc75028957)

# Introduction

To the MSU Executive Board:

I wanted to begin by introducing myself. My name is Mitchell German (he/him) and I am entering into my fourth year of Health Sciences at McMaster. I have been involved with Spark for the past few years in various capacities, beginning as a Team Leader, then taking on the role of Sessions Coordinator, and now acting as the Spark Director. I would like to take this time to thank-you for allowing me the opportunity to act as the Director for Spark this year. Supporting first years has always been a passion of mine, and in this position, I am privileged to be able to continue to help first years at McMaster and help to promote a safe(r) space on our campus. I am confident that through my passion for Spark and the beyond capable Executive Team I have to support me, we can collectively help bring Spark to new heights in this upcoming year. I am extremely excited to see our vision for Spark come to life during these unprecedented times.

The transition into university can be daunting and isolating for incoming first years. This difficult transition has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic where first years are left feeling disconnected, confused, and overwhelmed. As a first year, this transition can be more frightening than ever, especially without an adequate support system. Spark helps to ensure that first years know they are not alone. In all the chaos of first year, Spark acts as a moment of calmness. We are there to help support students through any failures they experience, and to celebrate their successes. Spark helps to ease the transition of first years into life at McMaster, ensuring they know they have a support system behind them that extends beyond just their first year of studies. By registering in Spark Sessions, students will have the opportunity to build relationships with our upper year Team Leaders and other first years in a variety of different capacities. Through Sessions, students will develop skills that they can use to find success in first year, and later life. Additionally, first years will learn about the resources that are offered by McMaster which they can lean on for support in times of need.

Aside from all the skills, memories, and relationships that will be developed through Sessions, Spark also provides its own online resources and events to help facilitate further growth. Our online resources are primarily found on our Instagram, where first years can learn about university life. While it may be obvious for us at this point in our time at McMaster, many incoming first years don’t know the difference between a lecture and tutorial, how to use their HSR pass, or how to purchase textbooks. All of these topics are taught through our publications. Finally, Spark also regularly hosts a variety of different events throughout the year that are open to all first years at McMaster, regardless of if they are registered in Spark. Events like Night Before Classes, Applicants Workshop, and others help to equip first years with skills that can foster their personal and academic success. Finally, through Spark’s outreach, we help to promote a safe(r) space on McMaster campus, and develop positive relationships with campus and community stakeholders.

Having been involved with Spark for three years now, it will forever hold a special place in my heart. Throughout these three years, Spark has taught me more than academics alone could have ever facilitated. Learning through the lived experiences of others in Spark, I have grown as an individual and cannot wait to see what we have planned for this year come to life. I am beyond privileged to have the opportunity to continue to learn and grow with the Spark Assistant Director, the Executive Team, and the Team Leaders. They are all incredibly talented, capable, and supportive individuals who truly help McMaster ‘Shine Brighter’. With this being said, I am grateful to be able to submit this Year Plan that outlines the vision of the Spark Team for 2021/22.

If you have any questions, or just want to chat, please do not hesitate to reach out. I would be more than happy to talk with you.

Sending joy,



Mitchell German

Spark Director 2021/22

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# Vision for MSU Spark

Ultimately, the vision for MSU Spark is always to help provide appropriate and effective support for the greatest proportion of first years that we can. *Please see below for the major initiatives that I am planning to implement in Spark this year to help make this vision possible.*

**Structural Changes to Sessions:**

Retention into the second semester has been something that Spark has consistently struggled with. Oftentimes, in the first semester, we will receive approximately 300 registrations and assign first years to groups of 10-15 with 2-3 Team Leaders. Then by the time winter registration comes around, we have a significant reduction in the volume of registrations and many students not attending the Sessions they signed up for. Not only does this mean that Spark is directly supporting less first years, but it can also lead to a loss of motivation amongst the Team Leaders and Spark Executives. Traditionally, Spark has conducted the same Sessions both semesters. I feel this could be why Spark experiences the drop in retention that we do. To help combat this, the following structural changes are planned to be implemented or already have been:

* Three Sessions Coordinators will be hired to reflect an increased responsibility in the role. Instead of creating 10 different Sessions that are the same between semesters, Sessions Coordinators will make a total of 16 Sessions that are all different. Therefore, there will be 8 Sessions per semester.
* Sessions will be divided by semester. The first semester will consist of Transition Sessions and second semester will consist of Leadership Sessions. To reiterate, all Sessions will be different.
* Sessions will be an hour in length as opposed to the typical 1.5-hour Sessions that Spark has conducted in-person in the past. This is to account for screen fatigue, and as a Sessions Coordinator last year, I made the same decision.
* A Sessions Committee of Team Leaders and Spark Ambassadors (first years) will work collaboratively with the Sessions Coordinators to help create the last 3-4 Sessions of the year.

With these structural changes in place, I am hoping to see an increased retention of first years registered in Spark attending Sessions.

**Structure of the Spark Ambassadors Program:**

Our Outreach and Engagement Coordinator is Spark’s newest Executive role, being added in 2019. Part of their role has historically been working with the Spark Ambassadors and receiving feedback from them on the programming that Spark provides. Spark Ambassadors are first years registered in Spark Sessions who are looking to take on additional responsibility within the Service. In the past, the Spark Ambassadors program has lacked structure, and each Outreach and Engagement Coordinator has taken their own approach. While this is definitely going to still be encouraged within Spark, we also want to establish a more rigid structure to the program that can be used in subsequent years. This year, we are planning to establish more frequent communication between Spark Ambassadors and the entire Executive Team by having them meet on a biweekly basis. Through this, the Spark Ambassadors will have the opportunity to become more involved in Spark by assisting Executives in their roles. This will include helping Sessions Coordinators develop Sessions that will be used later in the year. This will be particularly helpful for ensuring that first year voices are being heard in the development of Spark’s programming. Additionally, they will help the Events Coordinators with planning Spark events, potentially in collaboration with First Year Council. Further, Spark Ambassadors will also help the Outreach and Engagement Coordinators and Promotions and Publications Coordinators with planning our proposed Exam Care Packages.

There will be no limit to the amount of first years that can join the Spark Ambassadors program. However, this year we are expecting to have 5-6 first years helping us out. Additionally, we are considering changing the name of Spark Ambassadors to Spark Junior Leaders, or something similar. This name change is being considered to reflect their responsibilities within Spark. Not only are they ambassadors of the Service, but they are also taking on larger leadership opportunities than they have in previous years. They will assist in the development of Spark’s programming on numerous fronts, not just providing feedback as has been done in previously

**Spark Team Leader Committees:**

In past years, Spark has consistently had an Events Committee that has helped the Events Coordinators plan and execute their programming. While this provides an opportunity for the Events Coordinators to have additional support and increased peoplepower, it also allows Team Leaders that are looking to be more involved with Spark the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities. This year, we will continue to have an Events Committee, but also implement a new Sessions Committee that Team Leaders can be involved in. This will primarily be managed by the Sessions Coordinators, with assistance from the Spark D/AD as required. This will be an opportunity for Team Leaders to help to create Sessions, see the work behind the scenes, and help to conduct Sessions training with their fellow Team Leaders. Ultimately, this makes use of the peoplepower that Spark has at its disposal and increases the collaboration within the Service. To ensure Team Leaders aren’t being overworked, they will only be able to apply to one of the committees. However, it should also be noted that neither is mandatory for Team Leaders to participate in.

**Pods:**

In the past, the Volunteer Coordinator and Spark Coordinator were responsible for all communication with the Team Leaders. While there were Executives on call for particular Session times, they weren’t responsible for communicating any information to the Team Leaders. Rather, they were there for support if it was required during the Sessions, and all communication from the Spark Coordinator took place in a large Facebook Messenger chat. This year, I would like to introduce the idea of pods, similar to MSU SHEC. Each pod will be led by a Spark Executive, and they will be responsible for communicating any Spark updates or critical information on behalf of the Spark D/AD to the Team Leaders in their pod. This Spark Executive will still be on call during that Session time as well. Essentially, this Executive will act as a first point of contact for Team Leaders to help streamline the communication process. Additionally, I feel it will help to build relationships between the Executives and Team Leaders, which will also help to dismantle power gaps within Spark.

**Spark Scholarship and Certificates of Achievement:**

In the MSU Spark Operating Policy, it states that Spark provides certificates to first years who participate in and complete a specified number of Sessions. As far as I am aware, during the time that I have been involved with Spark, this has never actually happened. This year, I would like to bring that back, and communicate explicit criteria to qualify for this Spark Certificate of Achievement. Not only does this act as a form of incentive for first years to participate in and attend Sessions, but it also provides first years with a form of certification that they could use on a resume if they would like. This would exemplify that the first year has demonstrated a passion to engage in self-growth and develop their leadership skills as an individual. The criteria to receive this Spark Certificate of Achievement is currently being planned and developed by the Outreach and Engagement Coordinators and the appropriate changes will be made to Spark’s OP to reflect this.

Further, Spark is hoping to introduce a Spark Mini Scholarship in the 2021/22 year. This was an idea that was brought forward by one of Spark’s Outreach and Engagement Coordinators to help curb Spark’s notorious drop in retention during the winter semester. At this point, we are still in the planning stages of developing this, but it is estimated that it will be valued at approximately $250.00. Upon meeting with Graeme and Christina (Outgoing and Incoming VP Admin, respectively), they helped us by pointing out specific budget lines that Spark could use money from to fund this. This will not be an academic-based scholarship, because that does not necessarily reflect the values that Spark holds. Instead, it will be awarded to a first year that was registered in Spark Sessions and demonstrated investment in their personal self-growth and development of leadership qualities. Again, the eligibility criteria is currently being developed, but it will be explicitly communicated to applicants, and I will make the appropriate revisions to Spark’s OP to reflect this. This Spark Mini Scholarship is expected to be awarded during Spark’s Closing Ceremony for Sessions at the end of the year.

**Team Leader Guidebooks:**

Every position within Spark receives a transition report to help aid in the transition process except for Team Leaders. Typically, Team Leaders will be hired for their role in July/August, then wait for a month-long period until Spark Team Leader training before they actually understand what their role entails or even what exactly Spark is. I remember being hired as a Team Leader for the first time and helping at Clubs Fest not know what Spark was other than it being ‘*a program that helps to support first years in their transition to university’.* While this is absolutely true, Spark is also a lot more than just that.

To help support Team Leaders with the transition into their roles, Spark plans to produce a Team Leader Guidebook that will be distributed to Team Leaders after they accept their offer. It will be made by the Spark D/AD, Outreach and Engagement Coordinators, and Promotions and Publications Coordinators. While still in the planning and development process at this point in time, it is anticipated that the Team Leader Guidebook will include the following information:

* Letter from the Spark D/AD
* History and Overview of Spark
* Executive Team Contacts
* Past TL/First Year Testimonials
* Spark Lingo
* Services at McMaster (so TLs know when to refer first years to them)
* General Peer Support Guidelines (but still acknowledging that Spark is NOT an official peer-support service in the MSU)

In conjunction with the typical Team Leader training that takes place in September, we feel this TL Guidebook will provide a solid foundational base for the responsibilities of this role.

**Inter-Service and Inter-Role Collaboration:**

Something that I personally value as an individual is collaboration, and I would like to see Spark engage more frequently with this.

As a Sessions Coordinator, I found I only really communicated with the other Sessions Coordinator, and occasionally the Promotions and Publications Coordinator. This year, I would like to see more collaboration between the different Spark Executive roles. To help facilitate this, I am ensuring that each Executive has the opportunity to provide role-specific updates during our Executive meetings. This ensures that each Executive is up to date on the projects that other roles are working on. Aside from this, I would like to promote further collaboration between roles, having them work together more frequently (I.e., have Promotions and Publications Coordinators work with the Events Coordinators to promote their summer programming, or having the Outreach and Engagement Coordinators and the Events Coordinators work collaborating on Welcome Week planning, etc.).

Further, I would like to see Spark collaborate more frequently with other MSU services. Not only does this help with Spark’s outreach in the McMaster community, but it also helps from a financial standpoint where we are sharing the expenses of the project. This would allow for more well-thought-out initiatives throughout the year that Spark was involved with. Further, it helps to develop relationships with other MSU services and diversifies the ideas we bring forward to support the McMaster community. Currently, Spark and SHEC are expecting to work together during Welcome Week, and on other activities throughout the year. Ultimately, it helps to promote cohesion and unity within the MSU.

**Spark Online Discord Community:**

In the past, Team Leaders have been responsible for supporting the first years in their Session. If there were any questions that the Team Leaders were unable to confidently answer, they were passed on to another TL who had more knowledge of the subject. While this year that will still be an option, we are hoping to create a Discord community for the first years registered in Spark Sessions to help relieve the stress on individual Team Leaders and ensure that accurate information is being conveyed from TLs experienced on that topic.

The vision for this Discord platform is to create a community of first years registered in Spark where they can communicate and build relationships with one another virtually, as well as ask any questions they may have. From here, any Team Leader is able to answer these questions, regardless of if that particular first year is in their Session or not. Ultimately, this helps to give Spark more of a community-feel than it has had it recent years, but it also breaks down the barriers between different Session groups. Whereas first years could really only communicate with other first years in their specific Session, they will now be able to communicate with any first year registered in Spark, or any Team Leader.

# Projects/Events

## Continuous Activities

**Online Discord Community:**

The creation of Spark’s Discord community will allow for first years to continuously access academic and personal support from Team Leaders throughout their transition to McMaster. Here, first years will have access to all of Spark’s Team Leaders as well as all of the first years registered in Spark. This will allow us to enhance the cohesion of the Service and build a more tight-knit community. The logistics of exactly what this Discord community will look like has yet to be determined, as we are still in the early planning stages. However, what we do know as of now is that it will help to reduce the strain and role expectations on individual Team Leaders, allowing them to direct any first-year questions that they cannot confidently answer to a Team Leader that has more experience on that topic. Further, there will be a chat dedicated to only the first years registered in Spark. This will help to build relationships between first years that are in different programs at McMaster – something that has been particularly difficult for first years during the current COVID-19 pandemic. This Discord community will be open year-round for first years to help facilitate continuous support from TLs, access to McMaster and Hamilton resources, and the development of relationships amongst first years registered in Spark.

## Repeating Projects/Events

**Spark Sessions:**

Sessions are an integral part of Spark and are 1 of our 3 pillars. There have been structural changes to these this year to help to increase retention into the winter semester. This is something that Spark has continually struggled with. This year, first years will register for Spark Sessions for the full year, as opposed to one semester. In the past, Sessions were generally the same between semesters. However, now they will be divided into Transition Sessions for the first semester, and Leadership Sessions for the second semester. The purpose of this is to continue to provide first years with new content and activities that will help to facilitate their growth throughout the entire duration of the year. To accommodate for this increased responsibility on the Sessions Coordinators to make different Sessions each semester, we have created a Sessions Committee of Team Leaders to provide support, but we will also reduce the amount of sessions each semester to 8. They will all be 1-hour in length as opposed to 1.5 hours to accommodate for screen fatigue during the pandemic. Past themes have included: Intro to Spark, Safe(r) Spaces and Social Advocacy, Spark’s Declassified Online School Survival Guide, Collaboration and Leadership, Housing, Self-Care is not Selfish, etc.

Sessions are created by our Sessions Coordinators throughout the summer. Themes are chosen based on the unique needs of first years during that time. Sessions Coordinators will train Team Leaders weekly on the upcoming week’s Session, and Team Leaders will conduct the Session for their group of 10-15 first years. To provide the opportunity for first years to register for Sessions at a later point, we will reopen registration prior the winter semester as we normally do.

**Spark Ambassadors/Spark Junior Leaders:**

Spark Ambassadors/Junior Leaders is expected to begin shortly after the third Spark Session of the year, around October. Our Outreach and Engagement Coordinators are expecting to meet with the Spark Ambassadors biweekly, spending 1 month with each Spark Executive position to learn more about the Spark Executive Team and their roles/responsibilities. Cycling through the Executive Team, the Spark Ambassadors will have the opportunity to help with various projects including the graphics creation process and developing our Exam Care Packages with the Promotions and Publications Coordinators, developing helpful and accessible Sessions with the Sessions Coordinators, planning a Spark event with the Events Coordinators, etc. Additionally, they will have the opportunity to attend one of our weekly Executive meetings where they can develop their leadership skills and learn more about the roles/responsibilities of the entire Executive Team and what happens behind-the-scenes to conduct Spark programming. Not only does this allow the Spark Ambassadors the opportunity to engage in self-growth as a leader and an individual, but it provides them with relevant experience should they choose to apply to positions within the MSU, and specifically Spark, in the future. This experience is valuable considering the general lack of opportunities for first years compared to upper years at McMaster. Additionally, it may help to generate a greater interest in being involved in Spark following their first year and provide Spark with a more experienced application pool. All in all, it is expected that the Discord community will help to strengthen both the first year and Spark community.

## Annual Projects/Events

**Summer Programming:**

With MSU Horizons being rescinded, Spark has taken on the responsibility of conducting summer programming to help first years transition into life at McMaster and get them excited about joining the McMaster community. This will be planned and executed by our Events Coordinators. Recognizing that MSU Horizons was an entirely separate MSU service apart from MSU Spark with a separate Executive Team and budget, the programming will not be as in-depth as it has notably been in the past. Understanding our boundaries is important to ensure Spark can continue to provide adequate support to first years during the academic year. However, we have still prioritized the foundational concepts that we will include in our summer programming to help facilitate an appropriate replacement to MSU Horizons to ensure first years have a solid understanding of life at McMaster prior to being on campus. Essentially, we want to ensure that while taking on this responsibility of summer programming we are not taking away from the programming Spark traditionally conducts during the year.

This year, the Events Coordinators have planned programming in July and August that will be available for incoming first years. While this is still in its planning stages, the topics that will be included are as follows: Transition to University, Faculty Fest, Student Life, How to be Involved, and Engaging in Hamilton. These themes were decided based on the past programming that Horizons provided, the successes and challenges they faced, as well as the current needs of first years during the COVID-19 pandemic. All of this programming will take place online and will be in the format of a ‘webinar’. Students will register through Eventbrite and registration will be completely free. Using Eventbrite allows us to collect the emails of attendees, which can be used to notify first years when registration for Spark Sessions opens. Guest speakers will be present at these webinars, and our Events Coordinators are currently reaching out to these individuals. Not only does this increase Spark’s outreach and presence in the McMaster community, but it also allows us to provide first years with accurate information based off the lived experiences of others. When we diversify our team, Spark can ensure that a greater proportion of first years can be supported.

One aspect that we have been considering and are weary of is ensuring that these webinars are marketed differently than Spark Sessions. If the webinars are too similar to Spark Sessions, there is a possibility that we see a reduction in registration for Spark Sessions in the upcoming year. Therefore, we are attempting to be careful and diligent in how these webinars are advertised to prevent this from taking away from Sessions. However, on the other side, this summer programming is a fantastic opportunity to make first contacts with incoming McMaster first years and promote Session registration. The logistics of this are still being considered and we will use this opportunity to conduct summer programming to promote Spark Sessions registration.

**Normalizing Failure Campaign:**

Over the years, Spark as received extremely positive feedback from first years and Team Leaders for our Normalizing Failure Campaign. As a result, Spark is planning to host this initiative again this year in January. The Promotions and Publications Coordinators will be collecting submissions for Resumes of Failures to post on our Instagram with the intent to demonstrate that everybody has experienced failure in their life, regardless of how ‘successful’ they may appear. Failure is a normal part of the university experience, and Spark aims to highlight this so that first years feel less alone in their personal struggles or failures throughout their undergraduate degree. Without failures, we lose the ability to grow as individuals. During this time, our Sessions Coordinators will also host Sessions with a related theme and the Team Leaders will present Resumes of Failures to the first years directly and elaborate on their personal experiences with failure. We also tend to end these Sessions through a more positive lens by reflecting on our successes as well, because we have far more than we think!

**Exam Care Packages:**

Spark Exam Care Packages are something new that Spark would like to develop this year. This is being planned by our Outreach and Engagement Coordinators in collaboration with our Promotions and Publications Coordinators. At this current point in time, we are hoping to include some Spark merchandise to promote brand recognition amongst the first-year cohort, and also products to promote self-care. Recognizing the costs associated with this, we are hoping to seek out some form of sponsorship that can assist us in funding this initiative, or potentially collaborating with MSU SHEC. Spark is currently hoping this initiative will take place in December prior to exams. These Spark Exam Care Packages will coincide with our Spark Session theme at that time, a Spark destress event, and an exam ‘pick-me up’ message on our Instagram. Again, the logistics are going to be relatively complex. This includes determining who will be eligible to receive a package (I.e., only first years? All McMaster undergrads? etc.), how they will be delivered (I.e., only on campus? Are we willing to ship any? etc.) and more. Once we determine the budgeting for this initiative and confirm a partner to collaborate with, we will have a better understanding of what we are capable of.

**Exam Destress Campaign:**

This year, the Spark Executive Team has taken a special interest in supporting first years during exam season and helping them to manage their stress and prioritize their wellbeing. University exams are an entirely new experience for first years and can cause a lot of anxiety amongst the cohort. During this time, they are faced with the challenge of juggling multiple exams at once, learning what study techniques work best for them, and maintaining their motivation as the semester comes to an end. Spark plans to be there to help support first years through this part of their transition and ensure that at the end of the day, they are putting their wellbeing above all else. During this time, Spark will have programming on all fronts in our Exam Destress Campaign that is expected to take place in December. This will include an Exam Destress Event that will take place in collaboration with another MSU service (I.e., FYC, SHEC, Maroons, etc.) or with the SSC. Additionally, the Promotions and Publications Coordinators will be releasing an exam ‘pick me up’ message to help motivate our Team Leaders and first years. Further, the Outreach and Engagement Coordinators and Promotions and Publications Coordinators will create an Exam Care Package that will include self-care items and Spark merchandise. The logistics of this are still currently being determined and planned. However, this is an initiative that we are looking forward to introducing to Spark this year.

**Collaboration with FYC:**

This year, the Spark Events Coordinators are planning to host an event with First Year Council if we are not doing First Year Formal. At this point, we are unsure exactly what this will look like, but we are considering hosting another Trivia Night as we did last year with Campus Events. We are hoping this will take place sometime in January, but again, the logistics are still being considered at this point.

**First Year Formal:**

Historically, Spark has run First Year Formal in collaboration with First Year Council for multiple years. This is typically our largest event of the year, and a significant proportion of our budget goes towards it. Unfortunately, last year we were unable to run First Year Formal as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, Spark would love to see First Year Formal come back, but this is entirely dependent on the re-opening of Ontario, Hamilton, and the McMaster community proceeding the pandemic and that is completely out of our control. If anything, it would likely take place in the winter semester, and we will keep up to date with regards to what type of events Spark is permitted to host. Due to the uncertainty of whether this is even possible given the current circumstances, I will not have my Events Coordinators start planning until it is confirmed to be able to happen. I will have them dedicate their time towards other Spark initiatives in the meantime and help them to allocate the budget accordingly. If Spark can run First Year Formal, I will also collaborate with the FYC Coordinator, Julian, to see if we have the time, support, and resources at that point in time to host the event. I will also consult past Spark Coordinator transition reports to determine the logistics behind hosting First Year Formal, but at this point with the uncertainty of COVID-19, it wouldn’t make sense to invest my energy there at this point.

**Closing Ceremony:**

This year, Spark’s Closing Ceremony will take place once at the end of the year, instead of at the end of each semester. This is being done to reflect the structural changes that are being proposed for Spark Sessions, as each first year will register for the entire duration of the year. All Team Leaders, Execs, and first years registered in Spark will be invited to attend Spark’s Closing Ceremony. Currently, we are planning for it to be a mixture between a ‘social’ and an ‘award ceremony’ whereby we will engage in activities with each other, but also the Spark Certificates of Achievements, and the Spark Mini Scholarship will be presented. This will likely take place at the end of April or in May, but we will be cognizant to ensure it does not interfere with exam season.

**Charity Fund Campaign:**

Each year, Spark can donate $50 to the non-profit organization/charity of their choice. Last year, Spark donated to *Stop Asian American Pacific Islander Hate*. This was the decision of the Promotions and Publications Coordinator of the time, and I will leave the decision up to them again this year (Josephine Ding and Irene Zhao). This Charity Fund Campaign is typically promoted on Spark’s Instagram, where we will donate a specific amount towards a particular charity depending on the engagement we get on the post (I.e., we will donate $X to Y for every share that this post gets up to $Z). Last year, while supporting *Stop Asian American Pacific Islander Hate*, this campaign also helped to improve Spark’s outreach into the McMaster community with a reach of 5,049 and 591 shares on Instagram. Ultimately, the campaign was extremely successful, but we did experience some challenges in the process. Within the comments on our original Instagram post for *Stop AAPI Hate,* we did receive feedback that stated Spark should have donated to a Canadian organization. To develop a well-thought out and explained response, we had asked Michael Wooder to support us. With regards to this feedback, this was a valid point that was made and something that should be kept in mind for this upcoming year. I will make my Promotions and Publications Coordinators aware of this when they select their charity and ensure it is slightly more local than was done previously.

## Other Projects/Events

# Project/Events Timeline

*\*Please see below for a basic outline of what Spark’s year will look like\**

## Spring/Summer Term

|  |
| --- |
| May |
| Service Goals:  | * + Transition into the role of Spark Director
	+ Hire Assistant Director and transition them into the role
	+ Hire Executive Team, conduct Executive Retreat, and transition them into their respective roles
	+ Communications training for Promotions and Publications Coordinators
	+ Spark Incoming/Outgoing Event
	+ Executives will complete their year plans and personal goals
	+ Set out expectations for the year for the Executive Team, between Director and AD, and for Team Leaders
	+ PTM training for Director and AD
	+ Determine a weekly meeting time for Executive meetings throughout the summer
	+ Determine application questions for TL hiring with Executives
	+ Practice TL application marking
	+ Release TL applications via Microsoft Forms
	+ Conduct initial 1-on-1s and coship meetings with Execs and AD
	+ Alter TL JD and wait for approval from EB
	+ Weekly Exec meetings
 |
| June |
| Service Goals: | * + Complete Spark’s Year Plan for EB
	+ Team Leader hiring (Promotions and Publications Coordinators will create a graphic with Underground and a promotional video with Betta and the Comms Team)
	+ Hire additional Sessions Coordinator and Promotions and Publications Coordinator and transition them into the role
	+ Events Coordinators planning for summer programming and reaching out to guest speakers
	+ Developing Team Leader Guidebooks; include resources that will be useful for TLs to be knowledgeable about
	+ Determine TL interview logistics with AD
	+ Executives will mark TL application questions. They will be blinded to the applicant’s personal information and will mark on a 7-point Likert scale
	+ Determine interview station themes, questions, red flags/gold stars
	+ Send out interview offers for Team Leaders
	+ PTM Finance Training
	+ Work on Spark’s operating budget
	+ Confirm TL training weekends (proposed to be September 11th and 12th)
	+ Run mock interview with past Spark stakeholders who are no longer involved with the Service
	+ Sessions Coordinators will brainstorm and finalize Session themes
	+ Outreach and Engagement Coordinators will brainstorm rough eligibility for Spark Mini Scholarship and Spark Certificate of Achievement
	+ Follow first years on Instagram to increase our following for when registration opens
	+ End of June or early July ensure that we have promotions for summer programming ready
	+ Weekly Exec meetings
 |
| July |
| Service Goals: | * + Alter Spark OP to reflect the addition of the Spark Mini Scholarship and Spark Certificate of Achievement (also send to Victoria/Christina)
	+ Spark summer programming begins (Events Coordinators)
	+ Ensure eligibility for Spark Mini Scholarship and Spark Certificate of Achievement has been finalized by O&E Coordinators
	+ Have first year registration set-up so that it is ready for summer programming
	+ EB REPORT DUE – July 5th
	+ EB MEETING – July 8th
	+ Ensure Sessions Coordinators have finalized themes and Sessions #1-5
	+ TL interviews w/ Execs
	+ Finalize the TL Team, send out offers/rejections
	+ Finalize TL Guidebook so it is ready when TLs accept their offers
	+ Contact Paula Scott about Spark shirts from Entripy
	+ Apply to sponsorships and apply for grant from WW values (O&E Coordinators)
	+ Conduct 1-on-1s w/ Execs and coship meetings
	+ Confirm Session times prior to opening up first year registration
	+ Weekly Exec meetings
 |
| August |
| Service Goals: | * + Ensure Sessions Coordinators have finalized Sessions for the fall semester
	+ End of August ensure first year registration is open
	+ Promo for first year registration (first year Insta groups, Facebook, Discord, faculties, etc.)
	+ Ensure TL training is finalized by AD
	+ Finish off summer programming (Events Coordinators)
	+ Send out TL Spark shirts and for any Execs who still don’t have one (Darshana and Kyobin)
	+ Welcome Week collaboration with SHEC (potentially)
	+ Conduct 1-on-1s w/ Execs and coship meetings
	+ Confirm Sessions training times
	+ EB REPORT DUE – August 30th
	+ Weekly Exec meetings
	+ Collect feedback on Spark summer programming (Events Coordinators)
 |

## Fall Term

|  |
| --- |
| September |
| Service Goals:  | * + EB MEETING – September 2nd
	+ Promo for first year registration (P&P Coordinators)
	+ Sessions begin
	+ Organize first years into Session groups based on their availability
	+ Make coships of TLs
	+ Organize TLs into Session times
	+ Organize TLs into Sessions training times
	+ TL training (September 11th and 12th)
	+ MSU wide training for TLs and Execs
	+ Promote Spark Ambassadors and begin the programming with O&E Coordinators
	+ Send out first Session email
	+ Create Session graphics (P&P Coordinators)
	+ Run first Sessions training
	+ Weekly Exec meetings
 |
| October |
| Service Goals: | * + Run TL 1-on-1s with AD
	+ Begin planning for Event #2 – Exam Destress
	+ Check-in with Execs
	+ Ensure Sessions have been running smoothly
	+ Weekly Exec meetings
 |
| November |
| Service Goals: | * + Host a social for TLs and Execs at the end of November
	+ Finish 1-on-1s with AD
	+ Conduct 1-on-1s with Execs
	+ Weekly Exec meetings
	+ Release exam ‘pick-me up’ message on socials (P&P Coordinators)
	+ Plan end of semester appreciation gifts for TLs and Execs
	+ Begin to collect in-depth feedback from first years about Sessions with the Sessions Coordinators
	+ Send out TL feedback form
	+ Exec Social
	+ Weekly Exec meetings
 |
| December |
| Service Goals: | * + Weekly Exec meetings
	+ Prepare for the winter semester with Execs
	+ Make appropriate modifications to winter Sessions based on feedback from TLs and Execs
	+ Begin thinking about promo for winter registration (P&P Coordinators)
	+ Remind Execs to begin working on their transition reports or at the very least starting to think about them
	+ Recreate TL coships
	+ Re-collect first year availability and put them into a new Session group
	+ Revisit Session training times and see if these still work with the Sessions Coordinators
	+ Talk with VP Admin about what the rest of the year will look like (hybrid, in-person, is first year formal a possibility?)
	+ Begin to collect submission for Normalize Failure Campaign (P&P Coordinators)
	+ Weekly Exec meetings
	+ Plan for the re-training of TLs
	+ HOLIDAYS!
	+ Send out appreciation gifts
	+ Holiday Social
 |

## Winter Term

|  |
| --- |
| January |
| Service Goals:  | * + Weekly Exec meetings
	+ Retraining of TLs
	+ Promo for Winter registration for first years
	+ Normalize Failure Campaign (P&P post and Session theme)
	+ Begin planning publication #2 (P&P Coordinators)
	+ Collaborate with FYC to begin planning Event #3 (Events Coordinators)
	+ Schedule new Sessions training times
	+ Potentially schedule new Exec meeting times
	+ Check-in with O&E on Spark Ambassadors (begin helping to plan end of year Sessions)
	+ Ensure everything for the Spark Mini Scholarship is set up and in place
	+ Figure out logistics for Spark Certificate of Completion
	+ Weekly Exec meetings
 |
| February |
| Service Goals: | * + Execute Publication #2 (P&P Coordinators)
	+ Collect feedback on Spark events (Events Coordinators)
	+ Weekly Exec meetings
	+ Work on Director/PTM transition report
 |
| March |
| Service Goals: | * + All Execs should have a pretty good chunk of their transition reports finished
	+ Work on Director transition report
	+ Plan Charity Fund Campaign (P&P Coordinators)
	+ Prepare appreciation gifts for Events Committee (Events Coordinators)
	+ Prepare appreciation gifts for all TLs and Execs
 |
| April |
| Service Goals: | * + Charity Fund Campaign
	+ Cry because it’s all over
	+ Help transition new Director
	+ Appreciation gifts for all TLs and Execs
	+ Executive Event #3 with FYC
	+ Ensure Exec Hiring promo is ready to go for incoming PTM (or it can already be out)
	+ Collect transition reports from all Execs
 |

# Finances & Equipment

## Budget Projection



Above is Spark’s budget for the 2021/22 year. I have received budget training through VP Finance (JJ) but Spark’s budget plan is not due until after this Year Plan will be submitted (July 9th 2021). Therefore, I am unable to break it down any further at this point in time.

I would like to point out that Spark has received $2600.00 under the Adv. & Promotion line (6501-0125), which is the same as last year. However, with Horizons being rescinded, Spark now has taken on additional responsibility to conduct summer programming, and is now operating all year long. At the beginning of the year, I had concerns about whether the $2600.00 will cover all of our promotional expenses, seeing as we are now promoting for more programming. However, the budget does not reflect this increased responsibility. I will be working with Michael Wooder throughout the duration of the year to help allocate our expenses for promotional materials. Together, we have put together some strategies to help reduce our spending through the Underground to abide by our budget. I will present these during our EB Meeting.

## Inventory

As far as I am aware from past Spark PTMs, all inventory is kept in the Committee Room of the MSU Office. As a result of Ontario’s lockdown and stay-at-home order, I have been unable to determine what our inventory looks like since starting my role. However, from speaking with past Spark PTMs, what I do know is that we currently have a Spark pull-up sign, Spark stickers, Spark lanyards, rave cards, and various Session supplies. All of these can be accessed in the Spark cabinet found in the Committee Room. Victoria Scott typically assigns PTMs with keys to access the Committee Room throughout the year, but that has not been necessary due to the pandemic. Therefore, if anybody needs to access the Spark cabinet, Victoria Scott can assist them. I will likely have to stop by at some point in the year to confirm what Spark merchandise we currently have left over from previous years prior to making an order to Entripy through the Underground (Paula Scott). This will prevent us from purchasing unnecessary quantities of Spark merchandise, ultimately allowing us to minimize our expenses.

# Promotions

## Service Webpage

At this point in time, there isn’t much information available on the MSU website pertaining to Spark. In the past, it has been far more detailed including Executive bios, the pillars of Spark, etc. I would like to see Executive bios go back up on the MSU website for Spark to acknowledge the hard work that my Execs have done to obtain their position. As well, it is an easy reference page for individuals who are unfamiliar with Spark to find out who to contact in Spark for the questions they have (I.e., If you have a question about Spark Sessions, contact the Sessions Coordinators at sparksessions@msu.mcmaster.ca). Further, I would like to see additional information about the services that Spark provides. This includes updating the section on the current MSU website for the mentorship program to reflect the structural changes that have been implemented as of recently. Additionally, I would like to see information about upcoming events and registration links to streamline the process of registration. Currently, I believe that the Spark Instagram page does a more effective job at explaining what Spark is as an MSU service than the Spark page on the MSU website. Therefore, I would like to add additional information to the website to ensure all the information we are conveying is uniform.

## Social Media

**Social Media Platforms – Instagram, Facebook, Twitter:**

Currently, Spark uses Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to reach out to the McMaster population. We have a significant Instagram following (~4,248) making this our primary platform for promotions. At this point, we are currently hiring Team Leaders, and therefore, have been focusing on boosting engagement to maximize the number of applications we receive for this position. Typically, as the new Promotions and Publications Coordinator starts their role, they begin following as many first years as possible to ensure they are aware of Spark and what types of support our Service provides. However, this year, we have decided to hold off on this until after our TL hiring campaign (May 31st - June 14th) to ensure that we aren’t confusing any first years. The position of Team Leader is only open to upper years, and thus, we don’t want first years thinking they can apply, or more importantly, we don’t want first years to think that Spark isn’t a Service that pertains to them seeing as they cannot apply. Therefore, we are hoping to further boost our Instagram following proceeding the TL hiring campaign. Additionally, while we used to primarily reach out to Facebook groups like ‘McMaster Class of 2025’ to promote registration in Spark sessions, we will also ask these types of Instagram pages to repost our registration graphics.

**Tik-Tok:**

In the future, I believe it could be beneficial for Spark to create a TikTok account. This is something that we are considering at this point in time, being aware of the popularity of this platform amongst first years. We have talked to Michael Wooder about this, and are continuing to consider it as an option. To increase our following on TikTok, we could promote this new account on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. However, considering potential security issues, it is still up in the air. Additionally, we would have to strategically plan what type of content we want to be posted on the Tik Tok account. What would its purpose be and how will it differ from our other platforms? Outreach can be relatively difficult on Tik Tok, especially targeting specific populations. We will continue to consider this avenue.

**Discord Community:**

Additionally, we are planning to create a Discord this year for first years registered in Spark. This platform has become highly popular amongst the first-year population and as such, it will act as a congregate platform where first years can ask Team Leaders any questions they have about McMaster, their transition, etc. The purpose of this is that all the information is in one organized space, and it also takes the strain off individual Team Leaders. For example, instead of a first year having to ask the only Team Leader that conducts their Session a question, they can post it in the Discord and any Team Leader that is familiar with that topic can answer this question. This expands the knowledge base available for first years so that Spark can ensure we are conveying accurate information in a time sensitive manner. Ultimately, it helps to allow Spark to effectively support a broad, diverse population of first years.

**Carrd.co:**

This year, Spark’s Promotions and Publications Coordinators have decided to discontinue the use of Linktree on our Instagram and use Carrd.co instead. This has already been approved by Michael Wooder, and there are no associated costs with the use of this platform. The purpose for this change is because Carrd.co provides increased flexibility compared to Linktree. This platform is more accessible in terms of its functionality as it allows us to customize its layout for Spark’s purposes. Making this shift to Carrd.co allows us to better promote our initiatives throughout the year and is organized in a way that is more user-friendly for first years to access Spark’s resources.

## Merchandise & Apparel

**Past/Current/Future Use of Spark Merchandise:**

In the past, Spark has had T-shirts for our entire team, as well as lanyards and stickers that were available to first years during Clubs Fest and other programming. While I have yet to see what is still available in the Committee Room in terms of Spark merchandise, I will be looking in the future and am hoping to continue offering these products in the upcoming year. With the online nature of last year, the only merchandise that was provided were Spark T-shirts. They were either shipped or personally picked up by our Spark volunteers (Team Leaders and Execs). I am hoping to do the same for this year to allow for brand recognition in the programming that Spark runs. Spark also has a pull-up banner as far as I am aware, that is typically set-up at the location of Spark events and programming.

**PR Exam Stress Care Package:**

Additionally, while it is still in the planning stages, Spark is considering seeking out sponsorships to allow us to provide first years with a ‘Exam Care Package’ during exam studying in first semester. Admittedly, this is a huge feat, and the logistics are still being planned to ensure this can be done in a way that is financially and logistically feasible. In this package, it is expected that we will include Spark merchandise to ensure further brand recognition and outreach as well of small items that can help first years and the McMaster community engage in self-care and prioritize their wellbeing. This task will be undertaken by the Outreach and Engagement Coordinators.

## Contacts

**Spark Promotions and Publications Coordinators:** Josephine Ding and Irene Zhao

**Email:** sparkpromo\_pub@msu.mcmaster.ca

**When to Contact:** Questions about past or current Spark promotions and publications. Questions about what the Spark P&P Coordinator role entails. Anything related to Spark social media accounts.

**Underground Creative Director and Manager:** Paula Scott

**Email:** ugmanager@msu.mcmaster.ca

**When to Contact:** Questions about the MSU Underground. Contact Paula when submitting an intake form to UG and she will pass it on to the graphic designers. Any questions about the design of graphics. Contact Paula for any merchandise orders and she will relay the order to Entripy.

**Director of Marketing and Communications:** Michael Wooder

**Email:** comms@msu.mcmaster.ca

**When to Contact:** Contact if you have any questions related to social media guidelines, marketing tactics, paid promotions, Comms training, etc.

**Communications Officer:** Elisabetta Paiano

**Email:** commsofficer@msu.mcmaster.ca

**When to Contact:** We contact Betta for any additional promotional materials that are not made through the Underground (I.e., TL Hiring Promo Video).

# Onboarding & Administration

## Hiring

### Part-Time Manager(s)

The only PTM position that was hired within Spark (other than the Spark Director) was the Spark Assistant Director (AD). Applications were already being collected prior to me officially taking on the role of Spark Director. Applicants were asked to submit a cover letter and resume for the position. All applications were evaluated by the hiring board which consisted of Baila Lovejoy (Outgoing Spark Coordinator), Kyle Fraser (EB Member), and myself (Incoming Spark Director). They were graded using the MSU-provided rubric that uses a 3-point Likert scale. Top candidates were offered a synchronous interview via Zoom. Applicants who did not receive an interview offer were sent a rejection email. Interviews were scheduled by the Campus Events Office Coordinator. All interview questions were approved by HR prior to being asked to applicants. Again, applicants were marked using an MSU-provided 3-point Likert scale. The top interviewing candidate was offered the position of Spark Assistant Director. Unsuccessful applicants were sent a rejection email, or if they performed exceptionally well in the interview, they were fast-tracked to an interview for their top 2 positions on the Spark Executive Team. This decision was made by the Spark Director and approved by the VP Admin of the time.

**Spark Assistant Director:** Vivien Trinh

### Executives

The Spark Executive Team was hired using the following procedures. Applicants were required to submit a cover letter and resume (other than those fast-tracked from Spark AD interviews) and could apply to numerous positions. Applications were marked by the hiring board as per the MSU-provided 3-point Likert scale. The hiring board consisted of Baila Lovejoy (Outgoing Spark Coordinator), Vivien Trinh (Incoming Spark AD) and myself (Incoming Spark Director). Successful applicants were sent an interview offer and all interviews were scheduled by Calendly and took place via Zoom. Unsuccessful applicants were sent a rejection email. All interview questions were approved by HR prior to interviews. At times, applicants were offered an interview for a position they did not apply to at the discretion of the Spark Director if I felt they would be more successful in a different role. Successful applicants were offered a position on the Spark Executive Team. Unsuccessful applicants were sent a rejection email that encouraged them to apply to the position of Team Leader in the upcoming months.

The Spark Executive Team consists of:

**Promotions and Publications Coordinators (2):** Josephine Ding, **Irene Zhao**

**Sessions Coordinators (3):** Ryan Tong, Vithuyan Sugumar, **Kyobin Hwang**

**Outreach and Engagement Coordinators (2):** Sofia Ivanisevic, Abithiny Selvarajeh

**Events Coordinators (3):** Myra Agarwal, Ester Chow, Darshana Seeburrth

\*Names in **bold** were hired at a later point due to the requirement for additional support (P&P Coordinator) and an individual stepping down from their position (Sessions Coordinator).

### Volunteers

Team Leader hiring was pushed forward this year. Usually, applications open in late-June or early-July. This year, applications opened May 31st for the purposes of having additional peoplepower to support Spark’s new summer programming. Application questions were made by the entire Spark Executive Team after we had brainstormed what qualities we look for in Team Leaders. Applications were in the form of a Microsoft Form. Applicants were required to answer 4 questions that are evaluated by the Spark Executive Team using a 7-point Likert scale developed within Spark and used yearly. All questions were approved by VP Admin/Victoria in the absence of HR. Mock application marking was conducted by the Spark Director and Spark AD prior to actual marking taking place. Spark Executives were put into pairs or trios and each Spark Executive marked the same question for all applicants. There was no communication between Spark Executives marking the same question until all applicants had been marked. Any discrepancies of >1 point were re-evaluated by the Execs and a compromise was found. While we have yet to send out interview offers, we are expecting to send out approximately 100 interviews and applicants will receive offers based on the appropriate score threshold. Interview questions will be created by the entire Spark Team and will be sent to HR to be approved. There will be both individual and group stations. Interviews will be synchronous and take place via Zoom. Applicants will be marked by the Exec Team using a 7-point Likert scale. To select successful applicants, a tiering system will be used to ensure diversity in our Team Leaders. This allows us to support a greater proportion of the first-year population. This tiering system will likely include:

Tier 1: Past Spark Experience

Tier 2: Past MSU Experience (Not Spark)

Tier 3: Past Mentorship/Leadership Experience (Not in the MSU)

Tier 4: None of the Above

Top scoring applicants in each tier will be offered the position of Team Leader to fill a total of approximately 34 positions. The number of applicants that we will take from each tier has yet to be determined. Unsuccessful applicants will receive a rejection email.

The purpose of including a tiering system within our Team Leader hiring is to ensure we hire a group of upper years that have diverse lived experiences. This allows our TL team to be able to effectively support a greater proportion of the first-year population at McMaster.

## Training

### Part-Time Manager(s)

This year, there were organizational changes in Spark with regards to the management layout. The position of Spark Coordinator was changed to Spark Director and the past position of Volunteer Coordinator was replaced with the Spark Assistant Director to reflect these changes. For full transparency, the training for Spark Director was honestly very quick and vague initially. I would have appreciated having a transition report available to me before officially starting the position. As well, I was immediately involved in hiring the Spark AD, without having any formal training in MSU hiring practices or knowing who to contact for what. Additionally, during this period, I was asked to work 50% then 75% of my full work hours (12-14/week) while having to learn the responsibilities of my position and hire the Spark AD. In my experience, this was near impossible to abide by. For future, I feel there should be an adequate buffer period prior to jumping into Spark AD hiring to allow for a comfortable transition into the role. Additionally, the Spark AD received a transition report from the Outgoing Volunteer Coordinator. Aside from that, both the Spark Director and AD attended the MSU PTM training by VP Admin/Victoria Scott. We felt this was very thorough and well thought-out. Complex concepts were broken down into digestible content and VP Admin and Victoria were willing to answer any questions the PTMs had. As well, I had received Budget Training from VP Finance (JJ). While the module was quick, it was also very helpful and simplified a process that can be confusing for many individuals. I was intimidated by POs, expense forms, etc. prior to taking on this role but JJ made this learning curve easy. Additionally, both the Director and AD received Comms training with our P&P Coordinator. This was conducted by Michael Wooder, Elisabetta Paiano, and Paula Scott. This helped us navigate our social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter), marketing tactics, brand recognition, etc. We all found this training to be useful, engaging, and thorough.

### Executives

**Incoming/Outgoing Event:**

Traditionally, the Incoming Executive Team will have dinner at The Pheonix with the Outgoing Executive Team during Light up the Night. Due to COVID-19, this was not a possibility. Instead, we did an Incoming/Outgoing Event where we facilitated some icebreakers and activities via Zoom. As well, this allowed an opportunity for first contact between the Incoming Execs and the Outgoing Execs to facilitate passing off of transition reports for the roles. Ultimately, it was a success and I think it provided a welcoming atmosphere for the Incoming Spark Executive Team. If there ever has to be an online ‘transition event’ in the future, I would highly recommend this! It facilitates a positive start to the Spark year!

**Executive Retreat:**

While this is normally a 6–8-hour event that is held in-person, it was cut down to 3-hours this year based on the availability of the Spark Execs, but also to account for the possibility of screen fatigue on Zoom. Scheduling with our Exec Team this year has been difficult due to the increased size of the team (10 + D/AD). While I was personally apprehensive that it wouldn’t be in-depth enough to successfully transition the Spark Executives, it served to be just long enough that the Executives could stay engaged but also learn more about Spark, their roles, and the roles of Team Leaders. The following content was included:

* Icebreakers
* Spark Executive Team Expectations/Group Norms
* Situationals
* Spark Overview
* Role Introductions and Responsibilities
* General Spark Year Plan
* Goals for Spark in 2021/22
* Goals for the Executive Team
* Goals for the Team Leaders
* Upcoming Logistics

Additionally, the Spark Executives will be required to attend the MSU-wide training as well as our Spark-specific training in September.

**Transition Reports:**

After meeting with their predecessors during the Incoming/Outgoing Event, the Executives were provided with a transition report for their role. While there were no set expectations of what was to be included in these transition reports, they generally consisted of the following:

* Introduction from Outgoing Execs
* Year Plan
* Challenges
* Successes
* Future Direction

Coming into this year, the Spark D/AD are expecting to create a solid outline for the transition reports that will be the same for each Spark Executive. The intentions behind this is to ensure all relevant information is included and to hold the Execs accountable for helping the Incoming Executives transition into their role. This will be implemented as it was a lengthy process to collect the transition reports this year, ultimately slowing down the transition process for the Incoming Executives. Having Executives begin drafting these transition reports earlier in the year may also be beneficial to combatting this. Additionally, more explicit expectations of content and deadlines will be communicated this year to ensure Spark’s future success.

**2-on-1s:**

Shortly after the Executive Retreat, the Spark D/AD conducted 2-on-1s with each Executive to help transition them into the role and to get to know them on an individual basis. This was an opportunity to learn about the personal goals of the Executives, as well as learn their expectations of us, their fellow Execs, and how they prefer to be supported. These were extremely beneficial and helped to build relationships and cohesion amongst the Executives and the Spark D/AD. While it can be repetitive and time-consuming, it is extremely helpful and something I would highly recommend. It was also an opportunity for us to learn about the individual visions the Executives have for Spark and their roles, and how we can support them in achieving this. Additionally, I was extremely fortunate to have an outstanding AD who took minutes during this 2-on-1 that will stay confidential between us, but allow us to refer back to throughout the year. Through this, we can ensure we are supporting Executives in the way they like to be supported, hold them accountable for their goals, and help them to achieve them. Further, this was an opportunity to answer any role-specific questions the Executives had if they didn’t feel comfortable asking them during the Exec Retreat.

**Co-ship Meetings:**

Co-ship meetings took place after our initial 2-on-1s with all the Executives. This was an opportunity for all the Executives with the same position to meet with the Spark D/AD and go over plans they have for the year. As well, Spark has never had trios in a role before. But this year, we have 3 Sessions Coordinators, and 3 Events Coordinators. I was initially apprehensive about how the dynamic would play out and if this would be successful. I used this as an opportunity to check-in on group dynamic to ensure all Executives were pulling their weight, fulfilling their responsibilities, and working together appropriately. Additionally, it helped to ensure all the Executives were aware of upcoming projects they were expected to undertake, present the Spark D/AD with new ideas, and ensure that everybody was receiving consistent information to ensure we were all on the same page. I will continue to conduct these into the year, but think they have been extremely beneficial so far and would highly recommend continuing to use them.

### Volunteers

The annual Team Leader training typically occurs in the early weeks of September. We anticipate offering training following a similar timeline this year and we have tentatively set dates for the weekend of September 11-12th. Conversations of an earlier training was specially considered this year due to the accelerated timeline of the Team Leader hiring, however, this option was ultimately turned down due to the potential of having additional MSU-wide training in September and the projected workload of our current Executive team. Prospective Team Leaders have been made aware of these training dates in the written application. The training would be recorded for Team Leaders who are unable to attend training for academic, pre-approved reasons, or have provided reasonable notice. In total, we anticipate that fall training will be approximately 8 hours in length including the MSU-wide training sessions. The Spark-specific training will consist of general introduction to Spark material conducted the Director and Assistant Director; Indigenous Awareness Training by Stephanie George (IBCLC, Aboriginal Midwife, Speaker, Part-time Instructor at McMaster University); and Student Success Centre (SSC) Training by Tanya Kett from the SSC. These individuals will be formally contacted by the Director and Assistant Director mid-June, however, they have been pre-contacted regarding potential training.

Additionally, we will provide Team Leaders with a Guidebook to help their transition into the role. The purpose of the Guidebook is to ensure that Team Leaders have a resource to look off throughout their term when interacting with first-year students. This year, we plan to comply resources and contacts for Team Leaders (volunteers) in the form of a Guidebook. The Guidebook will predominately be planned and executed by the Director and Assistant Director with the creative design assistance from our Promotions & Publications Coordinators. To ensure that we have correctly reflected the roles of the MSU-services, a Microsoft Form has been sent by the Director in mid-May and has been circulating amongst the PTMs.

Planning for Winter Team Leader Training will begin mid to late Fall semester.

## Year Plan

### Executives

Executives have created general year plans within Spark that I have read through and provided feedback for. In the past, we have used a Master Timeline for Spark where all Execs will input important dates for themselves to keep in mind. While this does help to keep the Execs accountable for the goals they have set, it can quickly become very overwhelming, confusing, and disorganized. Therefore, this year, I had them just create general year plans that they can elaborate on further as the year progresses. During our weekly Executive meetings, we also provide all Execs with the opportunity to provide portfolio updates so they can be aware of the initiatives that other roles are working on at that time.

## Reports

This is the first report that I have made thus far. While it was a learning process in and of itself, I am unsure if I can elaborate any further than that. Starting early and checking in with your Executives is extremely helpful in the process to ensure that all roles are being accounted for and accurately reflected.

# Miscellaneous

# Appendix

## Full Contact List

**Name:** Michael Wooder

**Title:** Director of Marketing and Communications

**Email:** comms@msu.mcmaster.ca

**Notes:** Wooder is an *absolutely fantastic human* who is extremely helpful with all things relating to Spark and MSU branding. He is very knowledgeable about marketing, social media platforms, and effective promotional techniques. If you have any questions related to Spark’s social media, he is your guy!

**Name:** Paula Scott

**Title:** Underground Creative Manager and Director

**Email:** ugmanager@msu.mcmaster.ca

**Notes:** Paula is also FANTASTIC and incredibly knowledgeable about the Underground and the graphic creation process. If you have questions about pricing, ordering Spark merchandise, or graphics, she is the person to go to! Send all intake forms to her as well!

**Name:** Elisabetta Paiano

**Title:** Communications Officer

**Email:** commsofficer@msu.mcmaster.ca

**Notes:** Elisabetta has done a phenomenal job on all our TL hiring videos, and other Spark videos as well. If you are looking to make one of these, get in contact with her!

**Name:** Tanya Kett

**Title:** Career Counseller (SSC)

**Email:** kett@mcmaster.ca

**Notes:** Spark has had a very close relationship with the Student Success Centre (SSC) in the past. Tanya is your go to communication for SSC and she LOVES Spark (and we LOVE her). SSC has been present at our TL training in the past, and they are a great service to collaborate with. They also are a fantastic resource for Team Leaders and first years.

**Name:** Victoria Scott

**Title:** Administrative Services Coordinator

**Email:** asc@msu.mcmaster.ca

**Notes:** In my mind,Victoria knows everything about the MSU. If you have any questions related to the Executive Board, policies, Spark’s OP, or literally anything else, she is a phenomenal person to go to! She can also provide you with keys if you need to access the Committee Room for any reason.

**Name:** Pauline Taggart

**Title:** Network Administrator

**Email:** PTaggart@msu.mcmaster.ca

**Notes:** Pauline is extremely helpful with anything related to Outlook, OneDrive, etc. She works in the IT department and can help you to set up the emails for your Executives!

**Name:** Human Resources (Position is not filled yet)

**Title:** Human Resources

**Email:** HR@msu.mcmaster.ca

**Notes:** You can go to HR to have interview questions approved, if you have any issues with hiring and want another opinion, and for job postings. HR will also send you all your applications after the job closing date.

**Name:** Christina Devarapalli

**Title:** Vice-President Administration

**Email:** vpadmin@msu.mcmaster.ca

**Notes:** As Spark’s PTM, Christina will be your direct supervisor. If you need any kind of support, she is your go to. I would recommend keeping regular communication with her so that she knows about any updates that have occurred within Spark. She is there to help you to thrive in your position, so don’t be afraid to reach out!

**Name:** Jeganiyah (JJ) Jayachandran

**Title:** VP Finance

**Email:** vpfinance@msu.mcmaster.ca

**Notes:** You will send your POs to JJ and she will approve them for you! She also helps to run PTM budget training, which was super helpful and easy to navigate. If you have any questions relating to spending, budgeting, or expenses, ask her! She can also help you if you need to access any additional funding.

**Name:** Kevin O’Mara

**Title:** Accounts Payable and Payroll Administrator

**Email:** payables@msu.mcmaster.ca

**Notes:** CC Kevin on all PO requests, and he will provide you with a PO# to keep track of if your request has been approved. He also has access to the MSU VISA and debit cards. I would also recommend reaching out to him if you have any issues with your own payroll.

**Name:** Kate Brown

**Title:** Accessibility, Disability, and Inclusion Coordinator

**Email:** access@mcmaster.ca

**Notes:** Contact Kate if you have any questions about the accessibility of Spark’s programming. She is extremely helpful!

**Name:** Sean Beaudette

**Title:** Residence Life Manager

**Email:** beaudes@mcmaster.ca

**Notes:** Contact him if you want to promo within residences (I.e., rave cards) or if you want to host programming in that space!