



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

Spark Director

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TO: Members of the Executive Board  
FROM: Mitchell German (he/him)  
SUBJECT: Spark Report 6  
DATE: February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022

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## Year Plan Update

Spark has the following updates for its Year Plan:

- We have officially started Sessions for the Winter term and had a total of 132 registrations!
- Spark x Maroons Wellness Bags were a HUGE success and we ran out of them within the first 45 minutes (originally planned to distribute the 200 of them over two days!)
- Applicants Workshop with the SSC was successful!
- Spark is planning to transition back in person later in the Winter term and are currently considering spaces we can book.
- Adv and Promo budget could eventually be an issue for Spark (increased responsibility but no increase in budget)

## Events, Projects, & Activities

### *General Service Usage*

Spark has officially started its Sessions for the Winter term! Traditionally, Spark has always struggled to maintain retention into the Winter term, with past years having only ~15 and ~34 registrations in 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, respectively. However, I am excited to announce that **we received 132 registrations in the Winter term** (and 219 in the Fall), which is over a **350%** increase in the Winter compared to the previous year! Team Leaders have started to conduct the Sessions this week, and they are all super excited to get the Winter term started! I cannot wait to see all the phenomenal connections they make with the first years.

### *Projects & Events: Sessions Registration (Complete)*

As mentioned, Spark has completed its Winter Sessions registration and Sessions have started the week of January 31<sup>st</sup>! As of now, they will be entirely virtually via Zoom for at least the first four weeks, until we have EOHSS completed, and rooms booked for the last four weeks. Ideally, this would have been completed earlier in the year, but with Omicron there was too much uncertainty around COVID-19 and the transition back to campus that it was not possible. However things are starting to (hopefully) look a bit more certain, and we will start planning for the transition to in-person Sessions throughout the next couple of weeks. This is something that I think is extremely important for the vitality of the Service, seeing as everybody who has done Spark in person before will be leaving this year. It is an excellent opportunity for volunteers that have only operated virtually to see how Spark works in person for the continuation of our programming.

### *Projects & Events: Spark x Maroons Exam Care Packages (Completed)*

This was an initiative that we ran with Maroons prior to the holiday break. Through funding from various sponsors, we were able to hand out 200 Wellness Bags to first years in MUSC. Inside the Wellness Bags were a variety of items to promote self-care, recognizing that this was the first set of exams that the first years had ever completed. These items included the following:

- Popcorn
- Granola Bar
- Face Sheet Mask
- Hand Moisturizer
- Play-Doh
- Chapstick
- Hot Chocolate
- Tea
- Coffee
- Spark Rave Card (to promote registration for Winter Sessions)
- Fuji Film Disposable Camera (only in four bags)
- \$100 Best Buy Gift Card (only in two bags)

Ultimately, it was a HUGE success, and I am very proud of the O&E Coordinators for all their hard work planning the logistics to make this initiative possible. It was initially included on my Year Plan, so this was also a slight personal success as well, being something that Spark has never done before. It was also a fantastic opportunity to collaborate with Maroons! Originally, we had planned to distribute the bags in MUSC for 4 hours, spread across two days. However, we had a line-up in MUSC of over 200 people before we had even got there. Needless to say, there were no leftover bags, and I am happy that Spark was able to contribute to the wellbeing of the first year McMaster population in

this way! In the future, it would be nice to be able to hand out more Wellness Bags because telling folks we had run out wasn't enjoyable. However, I will acknowledge that this was a logistically difficult and expensive initiative to begin with! Very proud of the Spark and Maroons teams for pulling this off! Thank you to everyone in the MSU Office who had also supported me with this initiative!

### *Projects & Events: Spark x MacCrafters Event (Upcoming)*

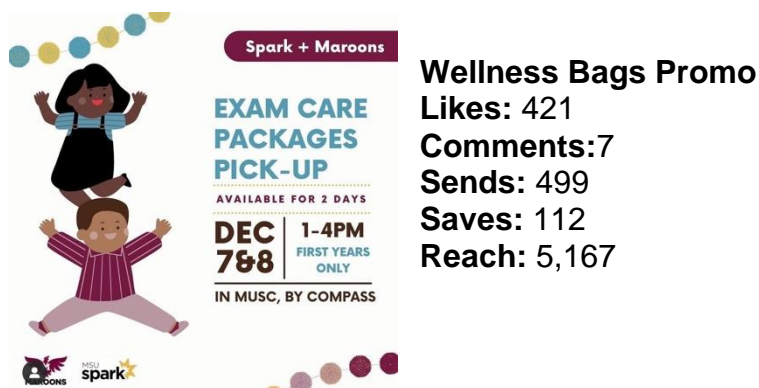
Spark is planning to collaborate with MacCrafters, an MSU ratified club, to conduct a crafting event in-person! I am SUPER excited to see this come to life, and it is something that Spark has never done before! This is still in the very early planning stages, and I will provide more updates in subsequent EB reports. However, I do think that it will be an excellent opportunity for first years to connect with Spark TLs, other first years, and for them to destress!

## **Outreach & Promotions**

### *Summary*

The O&E and P&P Coordinators have been working extremely hard recently, especially with the promotion of Sessions registration. Our success would not have been possible without them. The P&P Coordinators (Jo and Irene) had a huge variety of materials to help promote Sessions including a registration graphic, Spark video montage of the Fall term (it is very cute and would highly recommend watching if you haven't seen it!), a post for the Spark Achievement in Leadership Award, and they have also just recently begun their Midterms/Exams Destressor campaign. On the O&E side of things, Sofia and Abithiny had helped AVP Services with Spark's Service Review and helped us with Sessions registration by reaching out to first year professors and having them include a blurb on their Avenue page. During the end of the Fall term, the O&E Coordinators were also extremely busy planning for their Spark x Maroons Wellness Bags which was wildly successful!

### *Promotional Materials*



**Spark + Maroons**

**EXAM CARE PACKAGES PICK-UP**

AVAILABLE FOR 2 DAYS

**DEC 7&8** | **1-4PM**  
FIRST YEARS ONLY

IN MUSC, BY COMPASS

**Wellness Bags Promo**

**Likes:** 421  
**Comments:** 7  
**Sends:** 499  
**Saves:** 112  
**Reach:** 5,167



**Registration Promo**

**Likes:** 102  
**Comments:** 10  
**Sends:** 165  
**Saves:** 32  
**Reach:** 3,173



**Registration Promo**

**Likes:** 104  
**Comments:** 4  
**Sends:** 14  
**Saves:** 13  
**Reach:** 2,514



**Registration Promo**

**Views:** 7,175  
**Likes:** 141  
**Comments:** 4  
**Sends:** 18  
**Saves:** 10  
**Reach:** 6,142



**Exam/Midterm Destressor Campaign**

**Likes:** 149  
**Comments:** 3  
**Sends:** 25  
**Saves:** 39  
**Reach:** 2,270

*Social Media Engagement since the Previous Report*

*Table 1: Instagram Engagement Insights*

Insights	Start Values	Last Report Values	Current Values
Followers	4,532	5,357	5,456
Impressions	46,090	59,288	34,742
Profile Visits	2,951	2,114	1,825
Website Visits	229	311	165
Reach	5,290	8,897	7,899

*Table 2: Facebook Engagement Insights*

Insights	Start Values	Last Report Values	Current Values
Likes	2,678	2,653	2,644
Reach	920	1,746	713
Views	108	84	64
Engagement	129	202	67
Followers	2,817	2,791	2,780

## **Finances**

### *Budget Summary*

Spark had received considerable funding from partners for our Wellness Bags back in December, and we had \$200 left over from Alumni. With this, we have decided to allocate this money to our programming (we have checked in w/ Alumni about this), and with the additional room in the budget due to this sponsorship, we will make another Spark Achievement in Leadership Award. This decision was made as a result of the Service Review, where many students stated they wanted this to be expanded. Additionally, with the evident increase in our Winter registration numbers, it seems that it has substantially helped the Service!

As I had mentioned in EB Report #1 on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Spark is now at the point where we will realistically face challenges staying within our Advertising and Promotions budget. This is because Spark had the additional responsibility of conducting Summer programming (due to Horizons being rescinded) but didn't receive any additional budget to promote this. I would just like to advise the EB of this, and let you know that we are working with the UG and Comms Team to help us stay within this budget. We have approximately ~\$100 left in this budget line (after setting up our final standing order with the UG), and as we near the end of the year, it is a very real possibility that I will either have to ask to overspend beyond what we were budgeted, or not fulfill parts of Spark's OP. I anticipate we could potentially need an additional \$300-400 to complete the year from a promotional standpoint. However, I just wanted to make you aware of this, and am still fully committed to trying my best to ensure we stay in budget.

SPARK				
EXPENDITURE				
ACCOUNT CODE	ITEM	BUDGET / COST	PO SUBMITTED (DATE)	PO APPROVED
5003-0125	SPARK - OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$100.00		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$0.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$100.00		
6103-0125	SPARK - ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS	\$3,000.00		
	SESSIONS			
	EVENTS			
	FIRST YEAR FORMAL			
	OUTREACH			
	Wellness Bags Best Buy Gift Cards (x2)	\$200.00	2-Dec-21	6-Dec-21
	Wellness Bags (Walmart)	\$250.67	24-Nov-21	25-Nov-21
	Wellness Bags (Amazon)	\$844.15	24-Nov-21	25-Nov-21
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$1,294.82		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$1,705.18		
6501-0125	SPARK - ADVERTISING & PROMOTIONS	\$2,600.00		
	Spark T-Shirts	\$483.38	8-Jun-21	15-Jun-21
	Team Leader Hiring Graphic	\$125.00	8-Jun-21	15-Jun-21
	First Year on the Horizon Webinar Graphic	\$275.00	8-Jun-21	15-Jun-21
	Spark Sessions Registration Fall Graphic	\$125.00	8-Jun-21	15-Jun-21
	Mac Hacks Graphic	\$220.00	8-Jun-21	15-Jun-21
	Hike and Hangout Graphic	\$125.00	8-Jun-21	15-Jun-21
	Applicant's Workshop Graphic	\$125.00	8-Jun-21	15-Jun-21
	Spark Rave Cards (Quantity 200)	\$55.00	8-Jun-21	15-Jun-21
	Standing Order	\$550.00		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$2,083.38		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$516.62		
6494-0125	SPARK - VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION	\$750.00		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$0.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$750.00		
6802-0125	SPARK - LEADER TRAINING	\$500.00		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$0.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$500.00		
<b>TOTALS</b>				
TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		\$6,950.00		
TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		\$3,378.20		
REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		\$3,571.80		

## Executives & Volunteers

Both the Executives and TLs have a high morale entering into the Winter term and many of them have expressed their excitement to start Sessions with me! We had the opportunity to check-in with them during our Winter retraining and I think that many of them are excited by the possibility of being in-person. As



typically happens, we did lose some TLs into the Winter term, but we still have an adequate amount to be able to conduct Sessions, so this is not a worry. They have all consistently been attending Sessions and Sessions training and I truly think the first years registered in Spark are very lucky to have them. I think that some Execs specifically are potentially feeling a bit tired in their roles, but this is also understandable considering how busy the year has been and all the changes we have had to make due to COVID-19. I will continue to support them, and I don't think this will impact the quality of Spark's programming moving forward. With effective communication, we have been able to give specific Execs breaks when needed, and I think that the holiday break was a fantastic opportunity for them to recharge. Overall, there are no problems on this front for Spark.

## **Successes**

There are a few successes that I would like to share with the EB:

1. **Spark Wellness Bags:** As mentioned previously, the O&E Coordinators did a phenomenal both organizing the logistics of this initiative and actually executing it. They faced a couple of roadblocks along the way, but they prevailed, and I am beyond impressed! They secured plenty of funding, helped make the necessary purchases, organized the Wellness Bags with the help of the Spark Ambassadors (first years), helped promote the event, secured a location, and organized TLs and Maroons Reps into shifts. With all this hard work, when it was time to distribute the Wellness Bags, there was already a line of over 200 people in MUSC (which I will admit, was slightly overwhelming in the moment). Regardless, they demonstrated nothing but kindness and professionalism when distributing the bags, and we had quite a few people who received the Wellness Bags subsequently sign up for Sessions. All in all, I feel privileged that Spark had the opportunity to give back to the first-year community in this way! While somewhat logistically difficult, it is certainly an initiative I would recommend for future Directors as it promotes inter-service collaboration, the ability to directly support first years, and helps enhance Spark outreach.
2. **Sessions Registration and Session Coordinator Adaptability:** Coming into the role of Spark Director, one of my major goals was to improve registration for Winter Sessions because it is typically drastically lower than the Fall term. Not only does this mean that first years are missing out on opportunities for support, but it also means the TLs feel as though their role isn't valuable. To increase registration, I made some changes to the programming (having Sessions Coordinators change the Sessions between the Fall and Winter) and wanted to introduce the Spark



Achievement in Leadership Award (valued at \$200). These changes, along with phenomenal promotional material from the P&P Coordinators that far exceeds expectations, I think attributed to the high number of registrations that we saw this year for the Winter term compared to previous years. In the Winter term of 2019/20 and 2020/21, there were 15 and 34 registrations, respectively. This year, we increased that by over 350% for a total of ~132 registrations. I think this is a HUGE success that I am extremely excited to share! I suggest that future Directors consider how these changes in Spark's programming (different Sessions b/w Fall and Winter as well as the Spark scholarship) can be implemented on a more permanent basis (i.e., changing the OP). I also think they should continue to consider ways that we can further increase registration in Spark Sessions. Further, I just wanted to give the Sessions Coordinators a shoutout for their resiliency and adaptability. With the uncertainty of the Winter term as a result of COVID-19, they have been beyond adaptable with their Sessions and have helped to set up what I anticipate will be a successful transition back in-person for Spark.

3. **Sessions Registration Promo:** I think that we owe a lot of success in our Winter registration numbers to the phenomenal promotional material produced by our P&P Coordinators (Jo and Irene). They *consistently* exceed my expectations and I am constantly impressed by them. To promote registration they designed rave cards, posted numerous promotional videos and graphics. They are certainly a HUGE asset to the Executive Team, and I am beyond proud of them for their continued hard work into the Winter term!

## Current Challenges

Spark is facing the following challenges:

1. **Volunteer Retention:** This is something that Spark typically sees into the Winter term, and it is not necessarily something I am concerned about. Rather, I wanted to share for transparency. We lost 2 TLs going into the Winter term, but we do still have an adequate amount to run Sessions. The primary reason for leaving was just inability to juggle the role with other responsibilities. However, I will also state that especially in a virtual environment, the TLs are typically putting in less hours than what is outlined in the JD. As such, I don't feel that their roles/responsibilities are unfair, nor do I think they exceed what they should anticipate.
2. **Room Bookings:** This has just been a challenge due to the last-minute nature of these bookings as a result of COVID-19. While we want to make the transition back in-person for our Sessions, it is only possible if we can book these physical spaces to conduct them in. I would like to recommend to EB and future Spark Directors (although this is relatively out of their control) that they consider giving Spark a physical space to conduct these

Sessions. Booking spaces for over 200 people on a weekly basis is quite difficult and stressful from a logistical standpoint, and the fact that MUSC only allows Spark 3 hours a week of bookings doesn't quite make sense, especially considering we conduct approximately 20 hours of Sessions weekly. Thus, we are expected to find an additional ~17 hours each week of spaces that we can use. These bookings primarily fall under the responsibility of the AD, but with their 6-8 hour a week JD, they realistically will not have the time to complete this on top of their other responsibilities. I understand that there could potentially be a space that Spark could have in the new Student Activity Building and would strongly urge you to consider this for the vitality and growth of the Service in future years!