



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*  
MSU Spark Director

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TO: Members of the Executive Board  
FROM: Mitchell German  
SUBJECT: Year in Review Report  
DATE: March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022

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## Year Plan Update

Below, I will outline some of the goals of my initial Year Plan, and talk about what worked, what didn't etc.:

**Structural Changes to Sessions** → This year, Spark was able to hire 3 Sessions Coordinators (opposed to two), allowing us to change the Sessions between terms. Traditionally, Spark's Sessions in the Fall and the Winter are the same, but being able to hire 3 Sessions Coordinators, we were able to reasonably increase the expectations of this role. We also were able to form a Sessions Committee of TLs, and together with the Spark Ambassadors (first years) they helped to create a handful of Sessions in the Winter.

**Structure of the Spark Ambassadors Program** → This consists of first years who are registered in Spark and want to take on additional leadership responsibilities within the Service. The O&E Coordinators are responsible for leading this, however, it has lacked structure in the past and it has been difficult to find a structure as a result of COVID. This year, we were able to get a solid structure down, and the O&E Coordinators met with them on a regular basis throughout the year and connect them with the Execs. I think this will help the first years gain valuable leadership skills and insights into Spark that will ultimately feed back into the Service if they apply to be a TL or Exec.

**Pods** → This also happened this year, but to a somewhat lesser extent, and we called it Exec on Call. The Execs regularly communicated with the TLs this year through these groupings, but it was mostly in regards to last-minute Session updates. I think if we had stuck to the idea of having the Execs communicate any updates directly to them instead, it might help ensure that TLs are up-to-date on any communications. It would also reduce the workload of the Director and AD. Definitely something I would consider for next year!

**Spark Scholarship and Certificate of Achievement** → I will elaborate more on this below, but we are so grateful to be able to provide two first years in Spark

with this award at our upcoming Closing Ceremonies. Thank you to everyone in the MSU who made this possible! It certainly helped lead to increased retention and engagement with Spark throughout the year. It is also a way to recognize first years for their contributions (something that is seldom done) and help to inspire future leaders while providing financial aid. Very excited for this to come to life! In terms of the Certificates of Achievement, these have yet to be finalized but the O&E Coordinators plan to hand them out at Closing Ceremonies as well.

**Team Leader Guidebooks** → We were also able to make and distribute these internally this year. This is something that Spark has never done in the past, but I decided to introduce it after reflecting on my experience as a first-time TL. It can be a daunting position to hold at times and conducting Sessions makes no sense when you don't know what a Session is (as you could likely imagine). So, I felt that this would be a helpful supplement to our TL Training and also provided TLs with the history of Spark, the internal structuring, the roles of the Execs, the roles of a TL, and some McMaster, MSU, and Hamilton resources they could refer to if they needed to provide a first year with support.

**Inter-Service and Inter-Role Collaboration** → Spark certainly achieved this goal this past year. During our weekly Exec Meetings, each role had the opportunity to hear what the other roles were up to, and provide suggestions or feedback if necessary. This certainly helped to create a more cohesive Spark team, and ensured everybody was on the same page. Spark was also able to collaborate with various MSU Services (SHEC, Diversity, FYC, and Maroons) and an MSU-ratified club (MacCrafters). Ultimately, this helps to enhance Spark's outreach in the campus community to ensure first years know who we are and how we can support them!

**Online Discord Community** → This was somewhat of a more difficult task than I originally anticipated, especially considering that Discord is somewhat beyond my time (aging myself a bit here). Many first years use it, but not many of the Execs in Spark were vastly familiar. Additionally, the TLs tended to prefer Facebook. We had originally made the Discord at the start of the year and had first years join it, but it somewhat died out, and made communication difficult between Execs, the TLs, and myself if we had to post in Facebook, Facebook Messenger, then Discord. However, in concept I think it is a fantastic idea and wish that I had spent more time learning about Discord's functionality. I think future PTMs should consider the use of these online communities and how it could enhance the support Spark can provide to first years.

## **Events, Projects, & Activities**

### *General Service Usage*

Spark saw phenomenal usage of the Service throughout the 2021/22 year both virtually and in-person. We had the highest volume of registrations for our Sessions program in the Winter term that Spark has ever seen, with a 350% increase compared to the previous year. Further, we saw consistent engagement via our primary social media platform, Instagram, with large impact publications and posts that further set records within Spark. We were able to make a successful transition back in-person this year for the first time since 2019, and we continued to see consistent engagement with first years coming out to our events and other programming throughout the year.

Spark should continue to consider strategies that can increase engagement, specifically in an in-person environment. For the amount of work that the Events Coordinators had put into organizing events, it would have been nice to see slightly more engagement and turnout for them. However, it was still wildly successful, and they consistently brought innovative ideas to the table!

### *Projects & Events: Hike into Spring (Ongoing)*

Spark is hosting its Hike into Spring event this coming Thursday (March 24<sup>th</sup>). Students will meet Spark TLs and Execs at Les Prince, hike to Princess Point, spent time exploring Westdale, and then come back to Altitude for a bonfire. It will be an opportunity for first years to explore the beauty just off campus, and engage with the Hamilton community to a greater capacity. Registrations are taking place through Eventbrite, and only first years are eligible to register (recognizing the goals of Spark as a Service). Students can sign up for just the hike, just the bonfire, or both! We are very excited to see this event come to life, and the Events Coordinators have been working tirelessly on the logistics for the past few weeks!

### *Projects & Events: Indigenous Charity Donation (Ongoing)*

In collaboration with MSU Diversity (a Service that Spark doesn't frequently collaborate with), we will be posting a publication about culturally sensitive Indigenous terminology. In making this graphic, we asked for feedback from various Indigenous community members and organizations to ensure it was culturally sensitive. For each share to an Instagram story, Spark and Diversity will donate \$0.50 to *Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg*, a not-for-profit Indigenous organization in Hamilton. This will be up to a total of \$100. We will also be tagging prominent Indigenous-identifying Instagram accounts and provide resources where individuals can learn more. We decided to choose a local charity based on feedback that Spark had received last year for our AAPI post that wasn't founded in Canada.

### *Projects & Events: Spark Achievement in Leadership Award (Ongoing)*

Spark established its Achievement in Leadership Award this past year, which will be award to two first years and will be valued at \$200 each. Recipients must be registered in Spark, and accomplish the eligibility criteria outlined on Spark's Instagram. However, it consists of a specific number of Sessions attended, demonstration of commitment to Spark and McMaster community, and the quality of their 'application'. This will be awarded at Spark's Closing Ceremonies. I think Spark's scholarship had a HUGE impact on first year engagement with the Service, and in future years I would consider including it in the OP so that we could have a defined budget line dedicated to this. By doing this, we can ensure this initiative remains for future years and can continue to benefit Spark.

### *Projects & Events: Spark Mentorship Program (Sessions) (Ongoing)*

Hiring 3 Sessions Coordinators this year, I felt it would be feasible to ask them to cut down the number of Sessions they do each term (8 instead of 10), and make them different each term. Typically, Spark would have the same Sessions between terms, but I felt this was having an impact on Winter registrations and prevented Spark from being able to provide year-long support to first years. I think this change was extremely beneficial for first year engagement in Sessions, and this attributed to our considerable increase in Sessions registrations. As such, I would recommend continuing this structuring for future years. We also allowed Spark Ambassadors and Sessions Committee (a new initiative this year) to help the Sessions Coordinators develop their Sessions. I thought this would potentially feed back into the program, where folks will have relevant Sessions experience before taking on the role. Ultimately, I hope this will enhance the quality of Spark's future programming.

#### *Projects & Events: Spark's Guide to Specializations (Completed)*

This was certainly a MEGA publication created by our P&P Coordinators that seemed to be quite well received by first years and acted as a helpful resource. It described some general tips for applying to 2<sup>nd</sup> year specializations, resources first years can use to help in this process, and how to complete a minor or certificate in addition to your degree. This publication was extremely comprehensive, and the P&P Coordinators spent countless hours creating it! Even I learned some things I wish I had known! They also included additional resources on our carrd.co titled 'Spark's Guide to Specialization Selection' that went into further depth about the specialization process. I think this was a fantastic idea for a publication, and it came at perfect timing! They consulted with individuals from various faculties to ensure the information they were presenting was valid. Huge props to the P&P Coordinators!

#### *Projects & Events: So, You Think You Can Craft? (Completed)*

This was one of the few times that Spark has collaborated with an MSU ratified club, as opposed to the Services, and we collaborated with MacCrafters. I think that it was a fantastic opportunity for Spark to enhance its outreach and presence on campus through alternative avenues. Initially, we planned to 'craft competitively', but we decided that it took away from the stress relief aspect that many first years were looking for through this event. Ultimately, it was well-planned and executed. We had quite a few first years attend, and they had the opportunity to do Bob Ross painting tutorials and slime-making. We had a capacity of 60 first years, but we had plenty of supplies left over which could be used for Sessions in the future. Looking back, I would suggest to any future Spark PTM that they ensure the clubs they are collaborating with are aware of their budget and what they can provide financially. Communicating this is so important in my opinion, because it helps to set expectations and helps to prevent any unfair imbalances in terms of the effort being put in by either party. Admittedly, this was a lesson learned, but something I wish I had recognized earlier.

### *Projects & Events: Spark Valentine's Puns (Completed)*

I thought this was SUCH a cute idea brought forward by the P&P Coordinators, and I think it was executed phenomenally. We had fantastic engagement in Instagram, and we had our Team Leaders fill some out personally for the first years in their Session groups. The puns were quite cute, and we ensured they were all appropriate. Looking back, the only obstacle we ran into was the fact that on one of them, we included the McMaster logo. We decided to go ahead and post it anyways and didn't receive any backlash (likely because it was a respectful pun), but I would be cognizant of using McMaster's logo without approval. I wouldn't be surprised if McMaster asked us to take it down if they saw it. All around, this was a very cute initiative. It was a simple idea, but I think that making posts during special times of the year (New Years, Winter holidays, Valentines, Halloween, etc.) are always so festive and receive high engagement.

### *Projects & Events: Spark's Guide to Midterms, Exams, and Studying (Completed)*

I think that this was an extremely helpful publication created by the P&P Coordinators, and really helped to address some of the nuances of life at McMaster that first years may not have known about. This publication campaign consisted of three posts: Finding your Perfect Study Spot, How to Use an MSAF, and How to Access Your Exam Schedule. It also had fantastic engagement (as did everything else they created), and it was posted at a perfect time as first years were just entering into exams. All of the information they provided was accurate, comprehensive, and thorough. Very happy with the way this publication had turned out, and I think it was extremely relevant to the first year (and upper year) experiences.

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

This was personally one of my favorite initiatives that Spark ran this year, likely because I put it into my Year Plan at the start of the year. Spark collaborated with Maroons to complete this initiative, and it was wildly successful. We wanted to provide first years with these Care Packages as a means of helping to support them during the stresses that accompany exams. They included various self-care items, and four had a Fuji Film disposable camera, and two had \$100 Best Buy gift cards. To make this initiative possible, we reached out to various stakeholders and secured \$1500 in generous donations (huge shoutout to all those who donated). On the hand out day, we anticipated to have it spread over two days (4 hours each day) to hand out the 200 bags. However, we ran out within 45 minutes! This was also an opportunity for us to promote our Winter Sessions registration, as we put promotional materials in the bags. Very happy with how this initiative turned out, and I think how fast the bags were picked up by first years speaks for itself!

### *Projects & Events: Applicants Workshop (Completed)*

This was an event that Spark traditionally holds with the SSC yearly. It is an opportunity for first years to learn about some of the opportunities available to them, receive resume writing tips, interview tips, and other application tips! Recognizing the limited exposure that first years typically have with regards to applications for employment or ECs, I think it is a fantastic way for them to hone in their skills in this area. The event was held virtually via Zoom. One thing that I would make note of, is trying to improve communication with the SSC for the future. This was at the fault of both Spark, the SSC, and COVID craziness at the time, but setting expectations about communication in advance would have been helpful! Regardless, the event was successful, and I am very proud of the Events Coordinators and thankful for the SSC's support.

#### *Projects & Events: Normalizing Failures Campaign (Completed)*

This is also an initiative that Spark typically does, and I think it holds so much value for first years at McMaster, and even myself as an upper year! Normalizing failure is so important during a post-secondary education, because there are times when you will fail, but that just means there is an opportunity for growth. This year, Spark did a publication series of different TLs that shared their experiences with failure during their time at McMaster. Seeing all of these role models make themselves so vulnerable really sets an example for first years, and lets them know that failure is okay! This series will always be one of my favorites, and I think that the P&P Coordinators went above and beyond in the creation of these posts. It was an opportunity for both the Spark team to bond and get to know each other better, and it also helped to establish a sense of community on campus (virtually).

#### *Projects & Events: Hike and Hangout at Dundas Peak (Completed)*

For complete transparency, this event was quite stressful to plan for Spark! There were many obstacles that came our way, and it was our first attempt at an in-person event! However, the Events Coordinators persisted, and it turned out to be a wonderful event. This event consisted of hiking Dundas Peak, and then coming back to campus for snacks and hot chocolate. There were a couple of barriers we faced that future PTMs should likely try to learn from: (1) We hadn't been explicit enough in our promotions that this event was for first years only. As a result, we had many upper years join which is fantastic, but doesn't quite align with Spark's mission. (2) The night before, we realized the access to Dundas Peak we planned to use was un-useable because it was entirely under construction. This led to last-minute scrambling, trying to reorganize bus routes that we had already communicated to TLs. However, all worked out in the end! Overall, this is certainly a feel-good event that I would highly suggest continuing in the future! It was lots of fun for the TLs and the attendees alike!

#### *Projects & Events: Mac Hacks (Completed)*

This was singlehandedly Spark's publication that received the most engagement, ever. I think it was a genius idea that the P&P Coordinators suggested, and it reached outside of just McMaster, and was applicable to other institutions, and all years. It included various discounts and benefits that you can receive as a student at McMaster (or other institutions) including Amazon, Criterion on Demand, Shoppers, Fortinos, etc. They even included a direct link in our carrd.co for individuals to be able to access these discounts. All around a 12/10 publication, and I think it will be hard for Spark to top it. Huge shout out!

#### *Projects & Events: Campus Tour Video (Completed)*

This was an idea brought forward initially by our Sessions Coordinators for a Session activity, but we decided it would be beneficial to post on our Instagram as well. I think this was super helpful to both the first years and second years who weren't very familiar with McMaster's campus as a result of COVID-19. It was posted at the beginning of September, which was perfect timing as well. It was a successful post with considerable engagement! We ran into some issues filming because it was hard to find a time we were all free, and it started to get quite dark. But regardless, Betta did a PHENOMENAL job editing the videos and putting it all together. Could not have done it without her help!

#### *Projects & Events: Sparked at Mac Campaign (Completed)*

This is a campaign that Spark runs annually just before TL hiring as a means of generating some excitement before applications open. Ultimately, it is part of our TL hiring campaign, and we post photos of past TLs with their testimonials of their experiences in Spark. I think this is a SUPER wholesome campaign that we run, and it certainly creates some 'hype' surrounding the position. Would highly suggest doing this again, because it is relatively simple but has a huge impact!

#### *Projects & Events: Wellness 1A03 (Completed)*

This was an event that Spark ran in collaboration with SHEC that centered around harm-reduction and took place during Welcome Week virtually. It included a Meditation Workshop, Party Culture Jeopardy, and a Wellness Workshop. With all the hustle and bustle of Welcome Week, I think this was a fantastic opportunity to slow down and relax a bit for first years. We had initially chosen this theme because we felt it would likely fall under Welcome Week values (which we could receive funding for), but that somewhat fell through. However, I think it was still a very beneficial event for first years, and the harm-reduction approach was perfect timing having taken place at the beginning of Welcome Week. It helped to show that Spark and SHEC care about the wellbeing of the first-year community!

#### *Projects & Events: First Year on the Horizon Summer Webinars (Completed)*

Coming into the role and having to take over for Horizons, I was unsure what was expected of us in regard to Summer programming. However, the Events Coordinators went above and beyond to create a two-day virtual series that including three themes: University Life, Faculty Fest x Spark 1, Faculty Fest x Spark 2. We received approximately 200 registrations, and it was a fantastic opportunity to reach out to first years early and establish a relationship with them. I certainly think this helped our Fall Session registrations! It was also an opportunity to network with different faculties, and get to know their reps before Welcome Week began. It also made it easy for them to recommend Spark to their first years! Initially, we had planned to post these videos on the MSU YouTube page, but the Zoom recordings went to the cloud and (somehow) got lost. This was fully a mistake on my end, but also a fantastic learning opportunity! Ultimately, I think conducting this series virtually was very practical, and it would be quite difficult for Spark to conduct anything similar to Horizons. However, I would suggest continuing to think of avenues that could help streamline the Summer programming process in a way that doesn't stress the new Events Coordinators out too much!

### *Projects & Events: Team Leader Hiring (Completed)*

Spark received plenty of applications this year for Team Leaders (~175), as we typically do. Traditionally, Spark has conducted 3-hour long interviews, which is something that I wanted to try and change this year for accessibility purposes. We were able to cut it down to 1-hour, however, there were many that were back-to-back, which made staying on time imperative. Overall, we received plenty of positive feedback from applicants about the interview process (we sent out a Microsoft Form survey), and we tried to make it as engaging, enjoyable, and comfortable as possible for them. Additionally, this year it was important to me to be transparent about the hiring process of TLs to try and demonstrate integrity and an equitable hiring process. As such, we released transparency statements to all applicants after they had completed their application, and then again after their interview if they progressed to that stage. It essentially outlined the process we used to hire our Team Leaders by evaluating applications and conducting interviews, to demonstrate as much as possible the objectivity of our hiring process. This included how many Execs marked each question, what type of scale it was marked on, what happened with discrepancies, anonymity, etc.

## **Outreach & Promotions**

### *Summary*

The P&P Coordinators have worked tirelessly throughout the year to make high impact publications that are relevant to the current first year experience in the face of COVID-19. Spark saw record-setting engagement on its Instagram this year, and that is entirely attributed to Josephine and Irene (P&P Coordinators). I am beyond proud of them and all of their hard work throughout this year. Not disappointed by their work even once. Huge shout out to them!

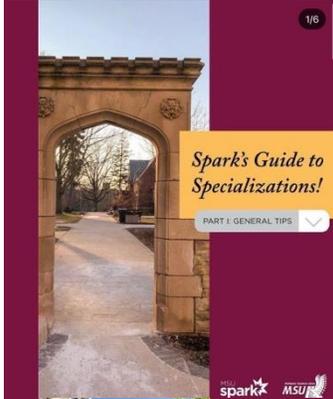
O&E Coordinators, Sofia and Abithiny, established some solid connections this year between Spark and external stakeholders allowing us to receive funding for various initiatives. They also did a lot of internal outreach by further connecting first years with Spark through the restructuring of the Spark Ambassadors program.

#### *Promotional Materials*

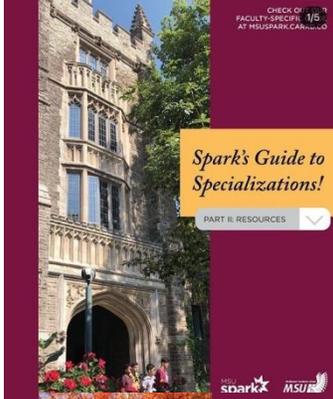
I think that I have generally done a thorough job of including Spark's new Instagram posts during the year in these EB Reports. With that being said, I will include our new posts here since the last EB Report was conducted. Please let me know if this is a problem, and I can certainly include all of Spark's posts throughout the last year.



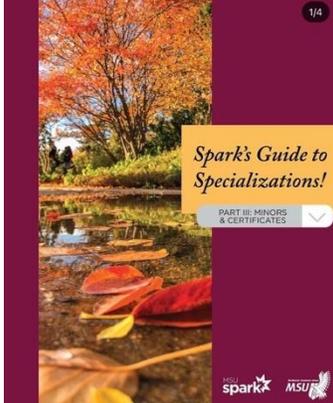
Likes: 133  
Comments: 6  
Shares: 87  
Saves: 28  
Reach: 2,784



Likes: 167  
Comments: 3  
Sends: 23  
Saves: 46  
Reach: 2,768



Likes: 166  
Comments: 0  
Sends: 11  
Saves: 44  
Reach: 2,693



Likes: 185  
Comments: 3  
Sends: 35  
Saves: 62  
Reach: 2,573

## Social Media Engagement since the Previous Report

Considering that I had just previously submitted an EB Report, rather than providing the typical engagement statistics, I thought I would simply show our following growth throughout this year, and compared to last year.

Instagram:

March 2021	Report 1	Report 2	Report 3	Report 4	Report 5	Report 6	Report 7	Now
4375	4532	5039	5312	5347	5357	5456	5423	5407

Facebook Page Likes:

March 2021	Report 1	Report 2	Report 3	Report 4	Report 5	Report 6	Report 7	Now
Unsure	2,678	2,662	2,661	2,666	2,653	2,644	2,642	2,642

## Finances

### *Budget Summary*

**Successes** → Spark did a good job ensuring that we were using our budget this year, even in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also sought out support from various stakeholders to help us run initiatives which also gave us some comfort space from a budgetary view. We have also been able to work with the P&P budget, despite the challenges we anticipated at the start of the year (however, I don't want to speak too soon, as the year is not over yet!).

**Challenges** → None! Other than staying on top of my budget, which I am working on before the new Director transitions!

<b>SPARK</b>				
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>				
ACCOUNT CODE	ITEM	BUDGET / COST	PO SUBMITTED (DATE)	PO APPROVED
5003-0125	<b>SPARK - OFFICE SUPPLIES</b>	<b>\$100.00</b>		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$0.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$100.00		
6103-0125	<b>SPARK - ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS</b>	<b>\$3,000.00</b>		
	SESSIONS			
		\$100.00		
	EVENTS			
		\$420.00		
	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	\$1,814.82		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$1,185.18		
6501-0125	<b>SPARK - ADVERTISING &amp; PROMOTIONS</b>	<b>\$2,600.00</b>		
	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	<b>SPARK - VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION</b>	<b>\$750.00</b>		
	Spark Sweaters	\$750.00		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$750.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$0.00		
6802-0125	<b>SPARK - LEADER TRAINING</b>	<b>\$500.00</b>		
	Amazon Gift Cards (Welcome Event)	\$55.00		
	Spark Sweaters	\$445.00		
	TL Social Amazon Gift Cards	\$15.00		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$55.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$445.00		
<b>TOTALS</b>				
<b>TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING</b>		<b>\$6,950.00</b>		
<b>TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING</b>		<b>\$4,703.20</b>		
<b>REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING</b>		<b>\$2,246.80</b>		

## **Executives & Volunteers**

**Executives:** I genuinely don't even know where to begin. The Spark Exec Team this year was truly that most dedicated, passionate, and resilient group I have ever worked with in my life. They showed each other nothing but empathy and kindness, and consistently put first years first. I felt so supported by them in this role at all times, and that never wavered throughout the year. They were truly always there for me. Their passion was inspiring and contagious. I have no challenges to list here. I think that our cottage getaway to Blue Mountain at the beginning of the year truly helped to bring us together, and this helped a lot with out dynamic as the year progressed. I am so proud to be able to call them my Execs, leaders in the McMaster community, but most importantly my friends. This was truly the highlight of my experience as Spark Director, and I learned so much through them that has helped shape me into the leader I am today. Aside from sappy things, I truly think our regular Exec Meetings and check-ins helped to keep Exec morale high and would recommend doing this for future Directors.

**Team Leaders:** This year, Spark has had a group of Team Leaders for the books. I was consistently impressed with their engagement throughout the year, commitment to first years, and overall resiliency. With all the transitions back and forth between virtual and in-person as a result of the uncertainty of COVID, they consistently adapted and thrived. Spark would not have been able to have the impact on first years that it did if they hadn't helped out at our events, promoted our publications, and ran weekly Sessions.

One note I would like to add as a potential challenge, is that I noticed some TLs were burning out at the end of their role somewhat. There was a significant proportion of missed Sessions Trainings and Sessions from some TLs, which I also want to be empathetic of due to COVID and general end-of-the-year stresses. However, it certainly added additional strain to the AD, who had to consistently reach out to update TLs who had missed trainings or Sessions. For future Directors, I would recommend setting out some more firm expectations regarding communicating absences and inability to fulfill the roles of a TL. However, we did try our absolute best to accommodate when possible!

## Successes

- 1. Spark Achievement in Leadership Award:** This was a HUGE accomplishment for Spark, and I am beyond proud of the O&E Coordinators for all of their work this year in making this possible. I think that it will have a positive impact on first years, provide them with financial aid, and help to shape resilient leaders in the McMaster community. This is certainly something I would consider putting into Spark's OP so that it could be (potentially) continued for future years. I truly think it was such an innovative idea by the O&E Coordinators, and attributed to increased engagement for the Service this past year.
- 2. Executives and TLs:** I feel so privileged to have been surrounded by such inspiring and dedicated leaders in the McMaster community. While I may have been the Director, I truly learned something new from each and every Team Leader and Executive. I was already so sappy above, so I don't think it's necessary to elaborate more. Huge shoutout to everyone in Spark for making this year one for the books!
- 3. Transition In-Person:** This was one of my major goals this year, with restrictions lessening around the COVID-19 pandemic, and the gradual return to (somewhat) regular life. I wanted to ensure this transition was possible for the vitality of the Service in the future, recognizing that everybody who has done Spark in-person previously would be leaving McMaster. While it was certainly difficult to submit all the EOHSS forms, have space bookings approved, communicate to TLs and first years about the transition, and set in-person expectations, we were able to FINALLY do it! The entire Spark team demonstrated resiliency and adaptability, and I am so happy they had the opportunity to conduct Spark in-person. Now hopefully it can stay that way (fingers crossed)!

## Current Challenges

- 1. Team Leader Retention and Morale:** I think it is normal in any position to start feeling burnt out by the end of the year. I also would attribute increased lack of motivation to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the sudden transition back to in-person education. While I can certainly empathize with this, I found that nearing the end of the year, TLs were starting to skip Sessions Trainings and then go conduct the Session having not been trained for it. Not only does this impact the quality of Spark's programming, but it also disregards the countless hours the Sessions Coordinators have put into designing Sessions and training the TLs. While a missed Session or training occasionally is certainly acceptable, it became consistent and wasn't being appropriately communicated to the AD. In the future, to mediate this I would recommend setting more firm expectations with TLs and uphold these throughout the year. Further, I think that potentially more frequent check-ins with TLs could also help foster more connections between them and the D/AD, which could enhance morale.
- 2. Room Bookings:** This was certainly a challenge this year with the late start to in-person Sessions. Typically, we book all the rooms in the Summer in MUSC, quite far in advance. However, this year, there were odd restrictions around these spaces, and we had to use KTH and BSB. While it all worked out in the end, it was definitely an extra hurdle for us trying to book spaces that had capacities to accommodate a Session. Even in typical years though, Spark can only book 3 hours a week in MUSC, which wouldn't accommodate the 17 hours we had of Sessions each week this year. I would recommend looking into some type of agreement that can be built between Spark and MUSC so that we can book these spaces out for Sessions easier. This is especially true considering that Spark doesn't have its own space, as other MSU Services do. While it worked this year, I think that it definitely would make the AD role far busier if they have to consistently find any free space to conduct a Session. I think it also creates some inconsistencies in our programming, especially at times when spaces have to be switched.

## Miscellaneous

With this being my last EB Report, I would like to thank everybody on EB for consistently supporting Spark, our goals, and myself. Your support truly made a difference, and Spark would not have achieved half of its accomplishments without you. Thank you for all you do to support the McMaster community! Special shoutout to Christina, JJ, Denver, Kevin, Victoria, Wooder, Betta, Jan, and Paula! Thank you for your help always! Honorary lifetime Sparklers 😊