



REPORT

From the office of the...

Spark Director

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Kyobin Hwang (She/Her)
SUBJECT: Spark Report 1
DATE: June 8, 2022

Yearplan Update

Over the first few months of undertaking the Spark Director role, I have been met with numerous successes as well as challenges. Firstly, I would like to highlight the amazing Executive Team that we have recruited, comprised of passionate individuals that each bring a unique angle to the Service. Due to unforeseen withdrawals of Executive Team candidates, there was a slight delay in finalizing a team, which has consequently set back our original timeline for TL hiring. However, along with the Assistant Director, we have established a new schedule that we will work diligently to fulfil such that we have a complete TL team by late July. Another achievement involves our first outreach engagement during May@Mac. This was a fantastic opportunity to inform potential first year students at McMaster University of the support lent to incoming students by Spark. We also ideated several new initiatives for this year (i.e., Spark Yearbook and First-Year International Student Chapter) and are in the process of coordinating repeating projects/events.

Events, Projects, & Activities

General Service Usage

We have not begun any programming within Spark as of yet or any outreach to the McMaster population other than for hiring. However, I will be able to provide a more in-depth update regarding this once we begin our summer programming.

Projects & Events: Project 1 (Completed) – May@Mac

- Spark participated in May@Mac to inform high school students and prospective first-year students about the Service
- No budget was expended for this engagement; rather, we utilized Spark supplies and swags from previous years (i.e., Spark banner, rave cards, stickers, and a sweater for display)
- The Spark booth gained substantial traction from students and parents
- We collected contact information (i.e., email addresses) from students interested in learning more about the Service

- In all, we collected 30 email addresses from students
- They will be sent one email overviewing Spark's mission, upcoming programs (i.e., summer program), link to Spark's campus tour video, and a link to an interest form for those that would like to be contacted about session registrations

Projects & Events: Project 2 (On-Going) - TL Hiring

- The Spark Team will shortly be starting the process of hiring Team Leaders (TLs) for the 2022/23 year.
- The initial written application will be in the form of a Microsoft Form and applicants will be prompted to answer four (4) application questions
 - The executive team is currently in the process of formulating written application questions based on four themes that reflect Spark's mission
 - Once developed, they will be sent to Renee/Mitchell to review in advance
- Interviews will be held virtually on Zoom and will be 1-hour in length to enhance accessibility for both the applicants and the Spark Executives.
- Interviews are projected to be held between July 13-24 and will consist of 5 stations (4 individual and 1 group station).
- We are planning to hire approximately thirty-four (34) TLs
- Offers will be sent out once the Executive Team has made all their final decisions.
- Applicants will be tiered based on their past experiences to ensure that we have a diverse group of Team Leaders who can support the greatest proportion of first years possible.
- My goal is to hire at least one (1) person from each program at McMaster to enhance the diversity of our TL team!
- Similar to last year, we will be collecting feedback from applicants on the interview process to improve for future years.

Projects & Events: Project 3 (Upcoming) – Summer Programming

- With MSU Horizons being rescinded, Spark will be taking on the responsibility of providing first years with programming (i.e., around 2-3 events) throughout the Summer
- This will primarily be the responsibility of our Events Coordinators (Myra, Daniel, Anika).
- They are still in the process of transitioning into their roles, but have started to brainstorm potential event ideas for summer programming
- I am meeting with them later next week to solidify ideas

Projects & Events: Project 4 (Upcoming) – Spark Scholarship

- Last year's Outreach & Engagement Coordinators (Abithiny and Sofia) pioneered this new initiative with the goal of increasing second semester session retention rates and acknowledging students that demonstrate a passion for Spark

- Similar to last year, the scholarship will be valued at \$200 and awarded to two (2) first-year student registered in Spark Sessions who demonstrates growth of their leadership skills throughout the year and who helps to promote a safe(r) space on McMaster campus.
- Eligibility includes having attended either four (4) Sessions in both the Fall and Winter terms (total of 8 Sessions), or alternatively, 6 Sessions in the Winter term to accommodate for first years who registered for Spark later in the year.
- There will be an application process for first years to apply for the Spark Scholarship that will allow them to reflect on their growth within the Service. All applications will be verified by one of the first year's TLs.
- Given the success of this pilot initiative last year, it is currently in the process of being augmented to the Operating Policy, such that it can be implemented yearly by the Spark Director
- Planning to speak with VP Finance about potentially including a budget line in Spark that is dedicated to the Spark Scholarship so the Service can receive consistent funding for this initiative.

Projects & Events: Project 5 (Upcoming) – Spark Yearbook

- The Promotions & Publications Coordinators (Jadyn and Linda) are planning to create a 2022-2023 Spark Yearbook
- This will be comprised of images of events throughout the year as well as photos of each session group, Team Leaders, and executive team members
- Therefore, the P&P coordinators will be taking photos throughout the year such that they can be included in the yearbook
- Of course, we will be collecting consent forms before inserting any photos of individuals
- There will also be pages at the end of the yearbook for Team Leaders and first year students to sign
- The Yearbook will be available both as a hard copy and digitally
- Based on interests, we are planning to print the Spark Yearbook for all Team Leaders as a volunteer appreciation gift
- The Spark Yearbook will make for a meaningful and creative memento that captures all the highlights from the year!

Projects & Events: Project 6 (Upcoming) – International Student Chapter

- This is a new initiative that still requires further planning and solidification of details
- It is not uncommon for first year international students to feel like an outsider and detached from the broader McMaster community
- With this in mind, Spark is planning to coordinate a program that connects first-year international students together and promote a sense of community

- The Assistant Director and I will be meeting with VP Admin next week to receive feedback on a couple ideas, but below is our preliminary brainstorming:
 1. Dedicating a session group to international students: When first-year students register for Spark Sessions, they will be provided with an option to be assigned to an International Student branch comprised of other students with this background. For this session group, we will aim to assign Team Leaders that likewise have an international student background.
 2. International student mingling event: The Events Coordinators (Myra, Daniel, and Anika) will be planning an event with a focus on connecting first-year international/out-of-province students to others that share a similar background. While the ideas are still unpolished, this event is projected to either take form of a Webinar or an interactive social full of icebreaker/bonding games.
 3. Publication on navigating McMaster University as an international/out-of-province student: The Promotions & Publications coordinators (Jadyn and Linda) will release a publication across our social media platforms about navigating school as an international/out-of-province student. The publication will impart helpful tips and resources to help students adjust to a foreign school environment far from home.

Outreach & Promotions

Summary

To date, our only form of outreach has been through the use of promotions to advertise the hiring of Executive Team positions (which we received many applications for and was very effective—approximately 125 applicants!). Once the P&P Coordinators, Assistant Director, and I attend the Communication Training with the Underground, we will make further headway with outreach as we will begin promoting for Team Leader hiring. As such, our primary target audience for this early phase has been and will be upper-year students that can fill the volunteer roles within the Spark team.

Promotional Materials



Likes: 218

Sends: 137

Saves: 172

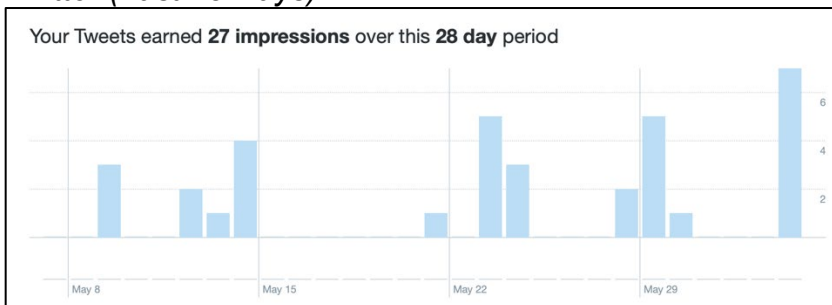
Reach: 3,907

Social Media Engagement since the Previous Report

Instagram (Last 30 Days)

Accounts reached	1,760	>
	-81.9%	
Accounts engaged	35	>
	-98.5%	
Total followers	5,384	>
	--	

Twitter (Last 28 Days)



Facebook

*I was unable to collect insight on Spark’s Facebook page as I have not been added as the Admin yet. I have contacted Wooder to coordinate this. *

Finances

Budget Summary

Spark has not spent any money as we have only recently received our budget for the year. Additionally, the programming that have been completed thus far (i.e., May@Mac) did not require any expenditure. In the near future, I foresee spending for TL hiring graphics (\$125) and I will set up a standing order with the Underground (UG) valued at \$1500.00.

ACCOUNT CODE	ITEM	BUDGET / COST
5003-0125	SPARK – OFFICE SUPPLIES	100
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	0
	REMAINING IN LINE	100
6103-0125	SPARK – ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS	3,700
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	0
	REMAINING IN LINE	3,700
6494-0125	SPARK – VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION	750
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	0
	REMAINING IN LINE	750
6501-0125	SPARK – ADV. & PROMOTION	3,200
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	0
	REMAINING IN LINE	3,200
TOTALS		
TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		0
TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		0
REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		25,000

Executives & Volunteers

- My Executive Team is filled with absolutely AMAZING human beings who are truly passionate about first year success. I am incredibly grateful to have an opportunity to work with these individuals. They all seem eager to contribute their skills and lived experiences to the Service and I look forward to all they will accomplish throughout the year!
- We have started weekly Executive meetings and have been focusing on transitioning each member into their role by sharing the transition report and fielding any questions they may have

- At this point in the year, there has been a lot of planning taking place for programming throughout the year and the Summer -- their morale is definitely high, and they have been working hard!
- I have met with each executive member individually to learn about their personal goals, excitement, and fears as they transition into their role
- Additionally, I will be meeting with each coship shortly to discuss their year plans
- We are planning the logistical details for Team Leader hiring. We will have an entire TL team hired by the next EB report.
- Team Leaders will be provided a Team Leader Guidebook as a substitute for the transition reports the Executives typically receive.

Successes

While it has only been a couple weeks since the Executive Team has been recruited, we already share several successes of which I am extremely proud! They are as follows:

- **Executive Hiring:** Together, the Assistant Director and I have hired a team of absolutely AMAZING Executives. While it was definitely a tiring hiring process that was prolonged with three promising candidates withdrawing from the application pool due, it was extremely rewarding, nonetheless. Based on my interactions with the team, it is clear that each Executive member brings unique talents to the team, and I cannot wait to see all of their work come to fruition. Being able to spend this year learning with them is an absolute privilege and I could not ask for a better Executive Team. They truly help to make McMaster 'Shine Brighter'.
- **Team Dynamic:** Generally, it is more challenging to develop tight relationships within a larger group; thus, I was initially concerned about our team of 12 members. However, based on my check-ins with the Executives both individually and in their coships, everything seems to be working out very well! In other words, the dynamic amongst the Executives as a whole has been phenomenal. The Executive Team, AD, and I have been able to establish a mix of personal and professional relationships with every individual. Overall, this has made the experience VERY enjoyable for everybody involved. For future Spark Directors, I think that taking the time to host an Incoming Executive Event and an Executive Retreat is extremely valuable in establishing these bonds early on. We have also set out clear expectations within the team that allows us to work respectfully and efficiently with each other. Ultimately, this has helped to set the Spark team up for future success!

Current Challenges

Spark has been facing the following challenges:

- **Scheduling:** With Spark's large team size (i.e., 12 members in total), scheduling a time when each Executive is available has definitely been difficult. We have established a weekly Executive meeting time which in

and of itself was a HUGE success, but finding times for additional meetings is definitely still a challenge. We have become very avid users of When2Meet, and it has been super helpful thus far! Additionally, recognizing that there will inevitably be meetings where some members are absent, we have been scribing thorough meeting minutes and have established an expectation for the coships to update each other on the missed meetings. We are also considering recording meetings in which we discuss important updates, such that all the Executive members are informed on the situation, despite not being able to attend the meeting. I recognize that scheduling for larger tasks, like TL hiring for example, makes it even more difficult to find a time when everybody is available. With that being said, we are trying our absolute best to accommodate to each Executive's scheduling needs.

- **Events Coordinators:** Whereas the other Spark executive roles have had ample time to transition into their roles, the Events Coordinators (Myra, Daniel, and Anika) had a shortened period for this as they were almost immediately assigned summer programming after accepting their positions. As such, they did not receive as much time as the other Executive members to thoroughly read through the transition report and contact relevant individuals with their questions. I have been trying my best to support them in any way by reading their transition report myself such that I can gain a firm handle on their role and address any questions they may have. Moreover, I am concerned that the Events Coordinators may be overworked. Given that we will be making headway with TL hiring shortly, this means that the Events Coordinators will be balancing between TL hiring and summer programming, which are both commitments that warrant considerable time and effort. To our advantage, one of the current Events Coordinator (Myra) is a returning member from last year. Her previous experience with navigating summer programming will be instrumental in facilitating this entire process. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that this may be the busiest period for the Events Coordinators; thus, I will be playing a larger role in helping the Events Coordinators plan for summer programs. In doing so, I hope to provide them the support and reassurance during this challenging time.

Miscellaneous

N/A