



REPORT

From the office of the...
Spark Director

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Kyobin Hwang (She/Her)
SUBJECT: Spark Report 2
DATE: July 6, 2022

Year Plan Update

The positive momentum of the Executive Team has been continuing throughout the summer. We are working towards recruiting a complete team of Spark volunteers and looking forward for first year students to begin engaging with the Service. The following objectives from the Spark Year Plan have been fulfilled since EB Report #1:

1. Finalize logistics for Team Leader hiring: The Executive Team has finalized the hiring timeline, written application questions, and interview stations. Applications for the Team Leader position is currently open and will close on July 8.
2. Solidify plan for summer programming: This year's summer program will take the form of webinar series based on topics including: Transition to University, Faculty Fair, and Student Life
3. Inter-service collaboration: Spark is collaborating with Macademics to conduct summer programming. This will help to enhance the reach of both our Services in the McMaster community.

Events, Projects, & Activities

General Service Usage

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

Projects & Events: Project 1 (Completed) – Adding Spark Scholarship to Spark's Operating Policy

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

- Seeing the success of last year's Spark Scholarship initiative, we have decided to add this to the Operating Policy, such that it can be implemented yearly by the Spark Director.
- In doing so, we aim to acquire a budget line dedicated to the Spark Scholarship so the Service can receive consistent funding for this initiative.
- With the support of Spark's Outreach and Engagement Coordinators (Vithuyan and Milica), a memo was composed and sent to VP Admin (Mitchell German) and the Administrative Services Coordinator (Victoria Scott).
- The clause that was added to the Operating Policy provides the following context:
 - The Spark Scholarship will be valued at \$200 and shall be 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;
 - There will be an application process for first years to apply for the Spark Scholarship;
 - All applications will be verified by one of the first year's Team Leaders.
- These changes are reflected under Section 2 (i.e., "Operating Parameters") and Section 3.3 (i.e., the role description of the Spark Outreach & Engagement Coordinators) of Spark's Operating Policy.

Projects & Events: Project 2 (On-Going) – Updating Outreach and Engagement Coordinator Job Description

- With the addition of the Spark Scholarship on the Operating Policy, I am currently in the process of updating the job description for the Outreach and Engagement Coordinator role.
- The revised Operating Policy states, in Section 3.3.2., that the Outreach and Engagement Coordinators are "responsible for overseeing the Spark Scholarship program."
- Thus, I am updating the job description for the role to ensure that it is consistent with the new policy.
- A memo and the revised Job Description document have been sent to VP Admin (Mitchell German) and the Administrative Services Coordinator (Victoria Scott).

Projects & Events: Project 3 (Upcoming) – Adding Summer Programming to Spark's Operating Policy and Updating Event Coordinator's Job Description

- Since Horizon has been rescinded, Spark has been undertaking summer programming for the incoming class of first-year students.

- As of current, summer programming is not reflected in Spark’s Operating Policy.
- Thus, I am in the process of writing a memo to augment summer programming to Section 2 (i.e., “Operating Parameters”) and Section 3.6 (i.e., Personnel Structure – Spark Events Coordinators) of the Operating Policy.
- The following clause will be added:
 - “MSU Spark shall facilitate workshops in the summer term for prospective Level I students at McMaster University to prepare them for their transition.” – Section 2
 - Spark Events Coordinators shall “Create and implement summer programming for the incoming first year community focused on first year success.” – Section 3.6
- Given that Spark’s Events Coordinators are primarily involved in summer programming, this responsibility will be added to their Job Description.

Projects & Events: Project 4 (On-Going) - TL Hiring

- The Spark Team has started the process of hiring Team Leaders (TLs) for the 2022/23 year.
- The initial written application is in the form of a Microsoft Form and applicants are prompted to answer the following four (4) application questions that were formulated by the Executive Team and approved by VP Admin (Mitchell German):
 - *How would you describe your first-year experience and/or transition into university? How can this experience be applied in your role as a Spark Team Leader? (Max. 200 words)*
 - *Team Leaders are responsible for leading reflective debrief periods with first-year students after the activities. During debrief, you notice a Team Leader speaking over a first-year student and rushing through the discussion. After the session, the Team Leader claims that students find debriefs boring, which is why they decided to speed through them. Given this situation, how would you proceed? (Max. 200 words)*
 - *Tell us about ONE instance you received feedback that was difficult to hear. How did you respond and what did you learn as a result? (Max. 200 words)*
 - *What does an inclusive space mean to you and how will you foster this environment within Spark? (Max. 200 words)*
- For reference, the written application form can be accessed here: https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=VULIUrBySUaVGi3kwXAAAnaq93hw639BBsEucJ9_QIQNUNkJZOUk2MUNKTDRaOVpTRIJJOUxKNTJZTS4u
- Applications opened on June 24th and will close on July 8th.
- Interviews will be held virtually on Zoom between July 18-23, and each interview slot will be 1-hour in length.

- Interviews will consist of 5 stations (4 individual and 1 group station) focused on the following themes:
 - Growth mindset
 - Time management
 - Conflict resolution
 - Empathy in vulnerable situations
 - Teamwork and collaboration
- We are planning to hire approximately thirty-four (34) TLs, and the Executive Team members will be invited to take on the role as well.
- 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 5 (On-Going) – First Year Formal Planning

- Spark is working towards planning First Year Formal, which is anticipated to take place in late November.
- The Events Coordinators (Anika, Daniel, and Myra) are prioritizing venue booking and finalizing a date for the event.
- Once the above items are established, the Events Coordinators plan to brainstorm theme ideas for the formal.
- They will also meet with the First Year Council Coordinator in the coming weeks to delineate each of the Service's responsibilities for the planning phase.
- Further insight on Spark's role in First Year Formal planning will be obtained after meeting with the First Year Council Coordinator.

Projects & Events: Project 6 (On-Going) – Session Development and Registration

- The Sessions Coordinators (Deeptha, Nicholas, and Tuqa) have been working extremely hard to develop Sessions that are both informative and engaging for the first-year population. I am extremely proud of them for all the dedication they have demonstrated thus far, and the first years are very lucky to have such passionate Sessions Coordinators.
- At this point, all 16 session themes have been finalized (the entire Fall and Winter term sessions).
- The themes for the Fall term sessions include the following: *Welcome to Spark, Get to Know Your Campus, Get Involved on Your Campus, Tackling Expectations, Goal Setting, Overcoming Imposter Syndrome, Wellness, and Exam Season Destressing.*

- The themes for the Winter term sessions include the following: *Welcome to Spark—Part 2, Hidden Gems of McMaster, Teamwork and Collaboration, House Hunting 101, Overcoming Burnout, Mac-ster Chef (FCC Collaboration), Mac to the Future (Long-Term Goal setting and Identity Exploration), and Discover Your City.*
- The Sessions Coordinators will be sharing completed sessions with the entire Executive Team for feedback.
- The first week of Sessions will begin on September 19th.
- Spark registration will open (hopefully) on August 22nd and close on September 17th.
- We are currently working with the Underground to develop promotional material. Specifically, we have connected with the Underground Creative Director & Manager (Paula Scott) to design rave cards that will direct students to the Sessions Registration form.
- All registrations will take place through Microsoft Forms. The link will be included on our Instagram and on the MSU website under the Spark page. For reference, the rough draft of this registration MS Form can be found here (<https://forms.office.com/r/XyBkzyZju4>)
- The purpose for collecting the demographic information about first years, as seen in the MS Form, is to ensure that we can create diverse Session groups!
- Additionally, Spark will be creating an email list of individuals that registered for our other programming (e.g., summer webinars). Those who signed-up for this will be notified of Session registration opening via email.

Projects & Events: Project 7 (Upcoming) – Summer Programming

- The Events Coordinators (Anika, Daniel, and Myra) have been planning a Summer Webinar Series based on the following themes: University Life and Faculty Fair (x2).
- Similar to last year's summer programming, the format will consist of three (3) Webinars that will be open for all incoming McMaster first years.
- They will take place on July 31st and August 6th-7th.
- Current collaborating partners include Maroons, FYC, Macademics, Archway, and faculty planners.
- All registration will be through Eventbrite and graphics request will be submitted to the Underground shortly.
- The webinars will take place via Zoom, which can accommodate upwards of 280 participants.
- All Webinars will be recorded and posted to YouTube for first years to reference if they were unable to attend. With this, we will ask all attendees to ensure they are muted, and their cameras are off as this video will be posted on a public platform.
- We will be seeking out sponsorship from the Campus Store to donate three (3) \$25 gift cards that will be awarded to one (1) attendee of the Webinars. If we cannot secure this, we will go through Alumni Association, or pull from our Events budget line if necessary.

- Spark Sessions pre-registration will be open when these Webinars run to allow Spark to take advantage of this first contact with incoming first years.

Projects & Events: Project 8 (Upcoming) – SSC Event

- The Student Success Centre has invited Spark to take part in their Mac 101 Student Services Fair on July 28 between 11am-3pm.
- The Outreach & Engagement Coordinators (Vithuyan and Milica) are currently in the process of designing our booth and we are reaching out to other Executives to see if they can be present at the event.
- During the event, first-year students will be participating in a scavenger hunt where each of the Service's space/location is a checkpoint to obtain a stamp. However, since Spark does not have an official space, we are currently deliberating various locations to setup our booth. Any guidance on this would be much appreciated!
- Spark is SUPER excited to be able to collaborate with SSC and I am planning on continuing this relationship throughout the year.
- We will ensure we have pre-registration for sessions open by that time so we can benefit from this opportunity!
- We will also be handing out Spark swag at the event, including stickers and rave cards that overview our mission.

Projects & Events: Project 9 (Upcoming) – Night Before Classes

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Spark has not been able to hold its traditional "Night Before Classes" event for the past two years.
- Night Before Classes is an event in which first years can come and meet their peers and upper years in their faculties and go for a tour of their class buildings.
- In previous years, this event has seen incredible turnout and has been a fantastic opportunity to promote sessions registration.
- Given the McMaster University's return to an in-person format, we are excited to bring back the tradition of the Night Before Classes event.
- The Outreach and Engagement Coordinators (Vithuyan and Milica) will be responsible for organizing this event.
- To ensure that the Team Leaders and executive members providing the campus tour are familiar with the buildings, a brief training session will be provided to all Night Before Classes volunteers (i.e., the "tour guides"), such that everyone is well-versed on the direction to various buildings on campus.
- Additionally, there will be one executive member on-call that volunteers can contact if they have any questions.

Outreach & Promotions

Summary

Currently, our primary form of outreach has been through the use of promotions to advertise the hiring of Executive and Team Leader positions. Therefore, we

have been reaching out to only upper-year students at McMaster. We have been approaching our target population through various tactics, including reels (edited by the MSU Communications Officer, Will Dang), volunteer testimonials, and asking other Services to repost our content. In effect, we have seen a substantial growth on our social media engagement, as you will see in the below section. Once we near the end of our hiring process, we will be shifting our focus and will begin to follow first years at McMaster on Instagram to ensure our promotions are making it onto the feeds of our new target population!

Promotional Materials

Team Leader Hiring Graphic (TL Hiring Campaign)



Likes: 170

Sends: 65

Saves: 120

Reach: 3,549

Team Leader Hiring Video (TL Hiring Campaign)



Views: 1,878

Likes: 63

Sends: 13

Saves: 13

Reach: 1,626

**This insight was obtained 3 hours after the reel was posted; therefore, we foresee reaching a broader audience in the coming days.*

Sparked at Mac (TL Hiring Campaign)



Likes: 101

Sends: 0

Saves: 2

Reach: 1,902

**This insight was obtained only 24 hours after the graphic was posted; therefore, we foresee reaching a broader audience in the coming days.*

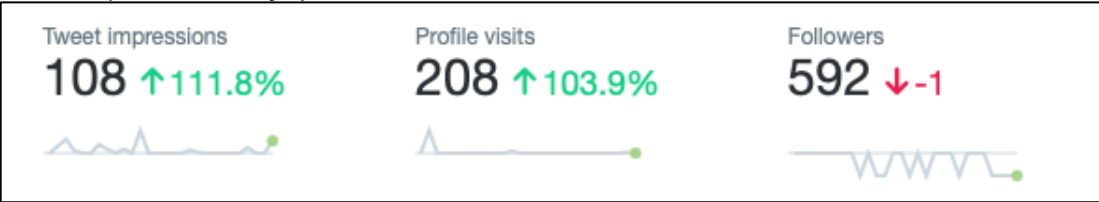
Social Media Engagement since the Previous Report

Instagram (Last 30 Days)

You reached **+132%** more accounts compared to Apr 30 - May 29

Accounts reached	4,090	>
	+132%	
Accounts engaged	338	>
	+894%	
Total followers	5,358	>
	-0.4%	

Twitter (Last 28 Days)



Facebook (Last 28 Days)



Finances

Budget Summary

I have completed working on Spark’s budget plan and have submitted it to VP Finance (Sarphina Chui) for review. All of Spark’s spending thus far has been from the Advertising & Promotions budget line (#6501-0125). Specifically, we spent \$100 on Team Leader hiring graphics and have processed an order for

450 Spark stickers valued at \$157. With the transition back to in-person programming, Spark needs to account for physical promotional materials in the budget plan (e.g., rave cards, stickers, and lanyards). However, the originally allocated \$3200 from the Advertising & Promotions budget line is simply not enough to create our promotional graphics and order promotional merchandise from the Underground. Thus, I have connected with VP Finance (Sarphina Chui) to ask whether we can reallocate \$300 from the Leader Training line (6802-0125) to Advertising and Promotions (6501-0125).

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	257
	REMAINING IN LINE	2,943
TOTALS		
TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		257
TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		257
REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		24,743

Executives & Volunteers

- My Executive Team is incredible, and I am infinitely grateful to have an opportunity to work with these individuals and learn alongside them.
- The entire Executive Team has been actively involved in Team Leader hiring. Specifically, they were involved in formulating the written application questions and are currently developing the interview stations. The executives have also been tasked with marking written applications and will be conducting the interviews.
- As such, Team Leader hiring is an extremely burdensome period for the Executive Team. However, they have approached the process with a smile on their face and with immense excitement. Their hard work has not gone unnoticed and the Assistant Director (Abithiny) and I try to express our gratitude to them on a regular basis.
- By the next EB report, we will have an entire TL team hired!

- Team Leaders will be provided the Team Leader Guidebook that was developed by the previous Spark Director (Mitchell German) and previous Assistant Director (Vivien Trinh).

Successes

The Spark Team has the following successes that I am proud to share:

- **Team Leader Hiring Preparation:** All executives are involved in the Team Leader hiring process to some capacity. The entire Executive Team was actively involved in developing the written application questions and planning the interview stations. Huge shoutout to the Promotions and Publications Coordinators (Jadyn and Linda) for their substantial contribution thus far. From designing beautiful promotional materials to communicating with various stakeholders (e.g., Underground, MSU Communications Officer, other Services to ask if they can repost our promotional material, etc.), I commend them for all their hard work. They employed various promotional approaches (reels, previous Team Leader testimonial campaign, etc.) to help our hiring posts gain traction. As illustrated by the social media analytics in the above section, they have successfully reached a broad audience. Everyone's dedication allowed us to commit to the originally established timeline, without having to delay any phase of the Team Leader hiring process.
- **Team Dynamic:** I say this time and time again, but this is one of the most supportive teams I have been part of. During our executive meetings, I have witnessed individuals offer suggestions when other roles mention a challenge they have been facing. As such, it has been incredibly motivating to see the executive members' genuine investment in the success of each other and of the Service as a whole. We have continued to set aside time at the beginning of our executive meetings for "check-ins" and it has truly helped our team bond. Indeed, we have cultivated functional friendships that extend beyond a professional setting. I cannot wait to see the Spark team continue to thrive.

Current Challenges

Spark has been facing the following challenges:

- **Service Space for SSC Event:** For the Mac 101 event hosted by SSC, the first-year students attending the event will participate in a scavenger hunt where they will collect "points" after finding each of the Service booth. Since Spark does not have a space, it has been a challenge to find a location to setup our booth on campus. I have connected with VP Admin (Mitchell German) about this, and he has suggested a couple locations. While our booth location is not confirmed yet, we are hoping it is finalized in the coming days. Similar to the issue faced in this scenario, Spark frequently encounters difficulties due to our lack of Service Space. For example, it is always a cumbersome process attempting to book rooms to hold weekly sessions. Additionally, last year, a major challenge we faced was finding a location to distribute the Wellness Bags on campus. All

these obstacles highlight that Spark can truly benefit from acquiring a Service Space, if available.

- **Advertising and Promotions Budget Line:** With Spark having to invest in physical promotional material for the upcoming year, it has been a challenge trying to ration our spending from the Advertising and Promotions budget line. In addition to accounting for all the promotional materials demanded by Spark's programs and hiring, we need to pull from the Advertising and Promotions budget line to order Team Leader shirts as well as physical promotional materials (e.g., rave cards, lanyards, and stickers). Based on my current budget plan, the amount of funds we received is simply not enough to execute all of Spark's plans. Thus, I have connected with VP Finance (Sarphina Chui) to receive guidance on this challenge.

Miscellaneous

N/A