



REPORT

From the office of the...

Spark Director

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Kyobin Hwang (She/Her)
SUBJECT: Spark Report 4
DATE: October 18, 2022

Year Plan Update

With the school term starting, Spark has officially started running many of our yearly programs. It has been great to see our volunteers engage with the first-year students through our events and weekly sessions. As a team, we reached numerous milestones and goals set in the Year Plan:

1. Night Before Classes event has been completed and was a HUGE success!
2. Spark's held eight outreach booths during Welcome Week to promote the Service to first years as well as to encourage sessions registration.
3. We collaborated with the MSU Communications team to film and release an informative reel about Spark. The reel gained incredible traction and effectively reached widespread individuals.
4. We posted our "What I Wish I Knew in First Year..." campaign reel, where upper-year Service volunteers shared their wisdom on lessons that would have been helpful to know when they were in their first year.
5. After months of planning, Spark started our weekly mentorship program! Overall, registration numbers and retention of first-year students have been high.

Events, Projects, & Activities

General Service Usage

Relative to the summer, our Service usage has increased exponentially. As will be further discussed in subsequent sections, we had 198 students register for Spark sessions. Though registrations are slightly lower relative to the previous two years (i.e., 210 registrants last year and 320 two years before), we acknowledge that the nuances brought by in-person sessions may be the reason for the decrease in registration numbers. As of current, we have completed four sessions for the fall semester. While the number of session attendees has decreased from the first two sessions, we have around 70 first-year students that have consistently been attending. We have held one official event since the start of the school year, Night Before Classes, which was incredibly successful.

Specifically, ~170 students accessed our Service for this event. It was indeed an optimistic start to our year!

Projects & Events: Project 1 (Completed) – Sessions Registration

- After weeks of promotions (e.g., creating promotional reels, posting graphics, reaching out to other Services to promote our content, and holding information booths), Spark has closed registration for our Mentorship Program (i.e., Spark sessions).
- As a result of the aforementioned efforts, we had 198 first-year students register for sessions. The screenshots in the “Miscellaneous” section of the report showcase the faculty distribution of registrants and how they found out about Spark.
- All registrations took place through Microsoft Forms. The link was included on our Instagram and on the MSU website under the Spark page. For reference, the registration MS Form can be found here (<https://forms.office.com/r/XyBkzyZju4>)
- We offer sessions Monday through Thursday at two times: 1:30PM-2:30PM and 5:30PM-6:30PM
- The first week of Sessions started on September 19th and we are currently on the fourth week of sessions (i.e., the halfway mark).
- While attendance has significantly dropped since the first two sessions, we have 65-70 consistently attending first-year students.
- This year, we decided to hold all sessions in MSUC rooms, which posed numerous roadblocks related to room-booking that will be further discussed in the “Challenges” section of the report.
- In preparation for each session, the Sessions Coordinators (Deeptha, Nick, and Tuqa) have been leading sessions training on weekly basis with the Team Leaders.
- Session trainings are currently held every Thursday, 7:00PM-8:00PM, and Saturday 1:00PM-2:00PM.
- All session materials for the fall semester sessions have been purchased.
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Projects & Events: Project 2 (Completed) – “What I Wish I Knew in First Year...” Reel

- The Promotions and Publication Coordinators (Linda and Jadyn) have created an Instagram reel to promote sessions registration.
- This reel features Team Leaders sharing things they wish they had known when they were in first year.
- As will be discussed in the social media analytics section of the report, this reel was incredibly helpful in helping the Service gain traction.
- Here is the link to the reel:
https://www.instagram.com/reel/CilRSHCpOnh/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Projects & Events: Project 3 (Completed) – SSC Event and ClubsFest

- The Student Success Centre has invited Spark to take part in their Student Services/Learning Fair booth on August 31.
- On September 6, Spark also partook in ClubsFest '22.
- We used both these events as opportunities to promote sessions registration and inform first year students about the services we provide.
- The Events Coordinators (Anika, Daniel, and Myra) have taken on the responsibility of both the SSC and ClubsFest booths, and they did a phenomenal job!
- They created a poster featuring past Spark photos and created a game where individuals have a chance to win various prizes depending on the popsicle stick that they draw.
- We also distributed Spark swag at the event, including stickers and rave cards that overview the Service's mission. Additionally, we had a QR code directing interested students to the Spark Sessions registration form.
- Team Leaders and other Executives were also present at various points to volunteer at the booth and represent the Service.

Projects & Events: Project 4 (Completed) – Welcome Week Booths

- The Outreach & Engagement Coordinators (Vithuyan and Milica) have taken the initiative to reach out to each Faculty Planner to seek further opportunities to promote Spark to the first-year students.
- Spark held a booth at the following Faculty's Club Fair: Science, Nursing, Kinesiology, Engineering, Health Sciences, and Arts and Sciences.
- The dates of the booths were dispersed during Welcome Week
- Numerous Team Leaders and Executives contributed their time by representing the Service at these booths
- Each of the booth had a QR code for Sessions registration for students that are interested.
- Participating at these Welcome Week booths undoubtedly helped expose Spark to more first year students. This is evident by the fact that 102 session registrants (~52%) indicated that they heard about Spark through Welcome Week. As such, these booths were incredibly effective in informing the first years about our Mentorship Program.

Projects & Events: Project 5 (Completed) – Night Before Classes

- 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.
- The Outreach and Engagement Coordinators (Vithuyan and Milica) was responsible for organizing this event, and they did an incredible job.
- This event was held on September 5, 2022 at the MSUC/Mills Plaza
- We had 17 Team Leaders and six Executives volunteer for the event.
- With a turnout of 170 students, the event was a huge success!

- Given that we had significantly more first-years show-up than initially anticipated, it was admittedly challenging to manage as we did not have enough volunteers.
- In groups of 8-10, Team Leaders provided first-year students with tours of their class buildings.
- Snacks were provided to attendees as were the QR code to Sessions registration for those that were interested.

Projects & Events: Project 6 (Completed) – MSU x Spark Reel

- Over the summer, the MSU Marketing and Communications Assistant (Hayley) had reached out to Spark for a collaboration opportunity on an Instagram reel.
- After weeks of planning, we filmed the reel on September 13, and it was posted on September 16, 2022.
- This reel was intentionally posted before sessions registration deadline in hope to attract more first-year students to sign-up for the program.
- As will be seen in the social media analytics section of the report, the reel gained substantial traction from students.
- Currently, it has 14.3K views and 509 likes.
- I would also like to take this time to thank some of the Executive Board members that kindly agreed to make a cameo in the reel—we greatly appreciate it!
- Here is the link to the reel:
https://www.instagram.com/reel/CilhUx1OCLc/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
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Projects & Events: Project 7 (On-Going) – First Year Formal Planning

- The Events Coordinators (Anika, Daniel, and Myra) have been working diligently towards planning First Year Formal, which is scheduled on November 5, 2022 at Michelangelo's Banquet Hall.
- After weighing various options potential platforms for ticket sale (e.g., Eventbrite, etc.), we decided to proceed with MSU Storefront as it does not charge a commissions fee and will display consistent branding.
- With the help of VP Finance (Sarphina), Accounts Receivable Supervisor (Jason Barnes), and Clubs Accounting Clerk (Hannah Shouldice), Spark was able to launch ticket sales via MSU Storefront:
<https://store.msumcmaster.ca/products/672-2022-first-year-formal-ticket>
- While not confirmed, Spark has been in contact with Sharp bussing company to book busses to commute students to and from formal. We are hoping to sign the contract and process the payment by the end of the week.
- Spark has also booked a photographer for the event, Sachi Chan.
- The Promotions and Publication Coordinators (Jadyn and Linda) have been implementing various promotional strategies to increase ticket sales. Specifically, we have printed posters posted in various parts of campus

and residence buildings and a banner hanging from the MUSC building. We also have our promotional content displayed on the TV screens throughout MUSC as well as the TV screens within residence buildings. Furthermore, we have actively been promoting the formal across our social media, also enlisting help from other Services by asking them to repost our content to their platforms. Finally, we have been running a social media giveaway for an iPad 8th Generation for individuals that tag their friends on our post.

- Despite our promotional efforts, the number of ticket sales has been incredibly dismal. Specifically, we have only sold 40 tickets as of late, with a projected sale forecast of 80 by the end of the week (when First Year Council and Spark volunteer tickets are purchased through our respective budget lines).
- The next step on Spark's end is sending confirmation emails to ticket holders and distributing and collecting waivers for the event. We will also be opening volunteer sign-ups to Team Leaders for those interested in helping with the formal.

Projects & Events: Project 8 (Upcoming) – Spark Ambassadors Program

- The Outreach Coordinators (Vithuyan and Milica) have been solidifying the logistics for the Spark Ambassadors program.
- Spark Ambassadors is an opportunity for first-year students to work alongside Spark's Executive Team to learn more about what Spark does behind-the-scenes and further engage within the Spark community. It will provide first-year students with more of a leadership role within Spark and will provide them with an opportunity to create some of Spark's winter programming.
- This is a six-week program that is scheduled to run from the week of October 17th through the week of November 21st, for an hour each week.
- We have 13 first years registered for the Spark Ambassadors program.

Projects & Events: Project 9 (Upcoming) – Meet the Services Fair

- Spark will be participating in Meet the Service Fair on September 27, 2022.
- The Outreach Coordinators (Vithuyan and Milica) will be running the booth; though, they will enlist help from Team Leaders and other Executives.
- We plan to have our banner, information board, and stickers at the booth.
- Through the booth, we hope to accomplish the following objectives: (1) inform more students about the Service, (2) promote First Year Formal ticket sales, and (3) promote sessions registration for the Winter term—registration will be open at this point.

Projects & Events: Project 10 (Upcoming) – **So You Think You Can Craft (Crafting Event)**

- The Events Coordinators (Anika, Daniel, and Myra) have been in contact with MacCrafters to collaborate on a crafting event for first-year students.
- First-year students will be provided with various crafting supplies and tutorials, so they can craft while forming relationships with their peers.
- Given the extensive number of leftover materials from last year's event, we will not be purchasing any new supplies this year.
- The EOHSS form for this event has been submitted and approved.
- The event is scheduled for November 9, 2022.

Outreach & Promotions

Summary

With the advent of the school year, we have focused on reaching the first-year population to promote weekly sessions and events registration (i.e., Night Before Classes and First Year Formal). This was mainly achieved through social media promotions. The Promotions and Publications Coordinators (Jadyn and Linda) have implemented various social media strategies, including creating and posting Instagram reels, reaching out to other MSU Services to promote our content, and following first-year students' account to build a relevant audience. In terms of future promotional plans, we will be posting a graphic to promote Spark's crafting event, Hike and Hangout, and the countdown for First Year Formal ticket sale deadline. The Outreach and Engagement Coordinators (Milica and Vithuyan) will also have an opportunity to further Spark's outreach by engaging with first-year students at the Meet the Services booth.

Promotional Materials
Sessions Registration



Likes: 167

Sends: 100

Saves: 55

Reach: 4,142

Night Before Classes



Likes: 501

Sends: 745

Saves: 156

Reach: 5600

First Year Formal Promotion



Likes: 577

Sends: 1125

Saves: 136

Reach: 6468



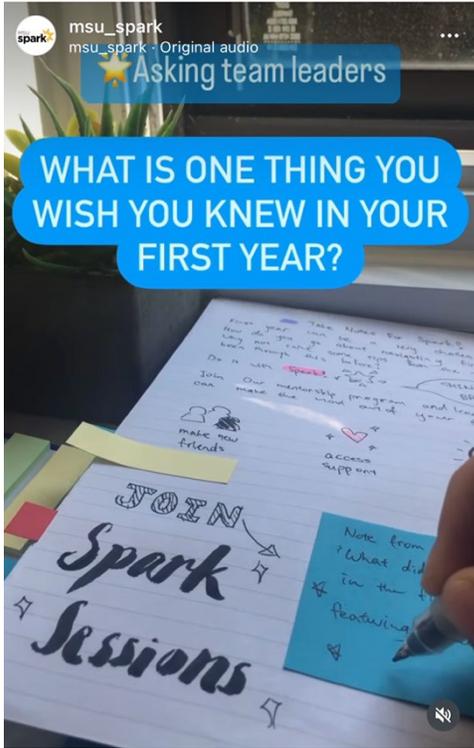
Likes: 257

Sends: 235

Saves: 29

Reach: 4664

“What I Wish I Knew in First Year...” Campaign



Views: 9775

Likes: 145

Sends: 35

Saves: 15

Reach: 6964

MSU x Spark Reel



Views: 14339

Likes: 509

Sends: 43

Saves: 24

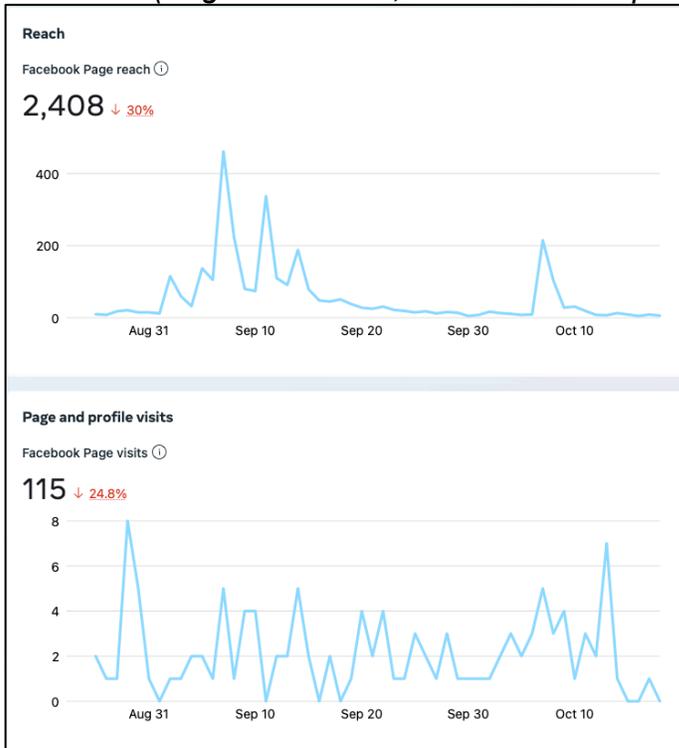
Reach: 11271

Social Media Engagement since the Previous Report

Instagram (Aug 26 – Oct 17; between EB Report #3 and EB Report #4)



Facebook (Aug 26 – Oct 17; between EB Report #3 and EB Report #4)



Twitter (currently not in use)



Finances

Budget Summary

In the recent months, Spark’s main expenses have been sourced from the Advertising & Promotion budget line (#6501-0125). Specifically, we have been ordering promotional graphics for First Year Formal. In addition to the social media graphics, we have also ordered physical poster prints and the MUSC banners. Furthermore, Spark has continued to pull from the Annual Campaigns budget line (#6103-0125) to purchase fall sessions materials. All of fall session materials have been purchased. The next large expenditure would be on First Year Formal bus bookings, which is scheduled to take place in the coming days.

ACCOUNT CODE	ITEM	BUDGET / COST
5003-0125	SPARK – OFFICE SUPPLIES	100
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$50.00
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$50.00
6103-0125	SPARK – ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS	3,700
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$2100.84
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$1599.16
6494-0125	SPARK – VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION	750
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$280.00
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$470.00
6501-0125	SPARK – ADV. & PROMOTION	3,500
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$2227.50
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$1272.49
TOTALS		
TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		\$8250.00
TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		\$4658.34
REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		\$3591.66

Executives & Volunteers

- As usual, I am consistently impressed by the work that the Spark Executives do. Their passion for first-year success is clearly evident

- through the work that they do in their respective roles. I am grateful for their continued support and dedication.
- Admittedly, the past month and a half was an incredibly busy period for many of the Executives as they were preparing their applications for professional schools. Recognizing that this may be the case, I communicated early in the year that Executives are welcome to take breaks from their roles as needed, as long as they inform me in advance. Thus, while I was able to accommodate breaks for many of the Executives, this did not affect Spark's operation, as we had made arrangements months in advance.
 - Morale of the Team Leaders has been fantastic thus far. They have been extremely engaged during sessions training, particularly the in-person one, and enthusiastic about their session group.
 - There were several volunteer opportunities for Team Leaders at Spark's events and outreach booth. We had many Team Leaders volunteering to at Night Before Classes as well as our Welcome Week booths! They are so willing to help and have been a HUGE support system for myself and the Executives.
 - We have taken our fall team photo (which have been inserted in the Miscellaneous section of the report)! It was great to see all the Service volunteers in the Spark apparels.
 - We have completed running the first four sessions of fall semester, marking the halfway mark for this term's mentorship program. The Assistant Director (Abithiny) and I will be meeting with each Team Leader and Executive on a one-on-one basis to check-in on how they have transitioned into their roles, seek feedback on the Service, and learn ways they would like to be supported. This is scheduled to take place in the coming weeks.

Successes

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

- **Night Before Classes:** After halting the event for the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Spark was able to resume the Night Before Classes tradition this year. Admittedly, we were expecting around 80-100 first-years students to show up to the event, so we were shocked by the turnout of 170 students! Given that we had prepared for a significantly lower attendance rate, there was a shortage of volunteers to lead the campus tours. Through the Executives' fast problem-solving skills and the Team Leaders' willingness to lend their support, we were able to enlist more volunteers on short notice. I was incredibly touched seeing the Team Leaders step into their roles to help first-year students navigate their direction on campus. The general feedback we received reflected how friendly the volunteers were and how helpful they found the event!
- **Sessions Registration:** The Promotions and Publications Coordinators (Jadyn and Linda) and Outreach Coordinators (Vithuyan and Milica) have

been working tirelessly to promote sessions registration at the beginning of the term. From contributing several hours running Spark Welcome Week booths to routinely posting and resharing Spark's registration graphics, their labour resulted in 198 registrations for fall sessions. While this number may not appear significant relative to the past two virtual years, it is important to recognize the nuances that come with the now in-person program. I am incredibly proud of our final registration number and have now shifted the focus to ensuring retention of these registrants.

Current Challenges

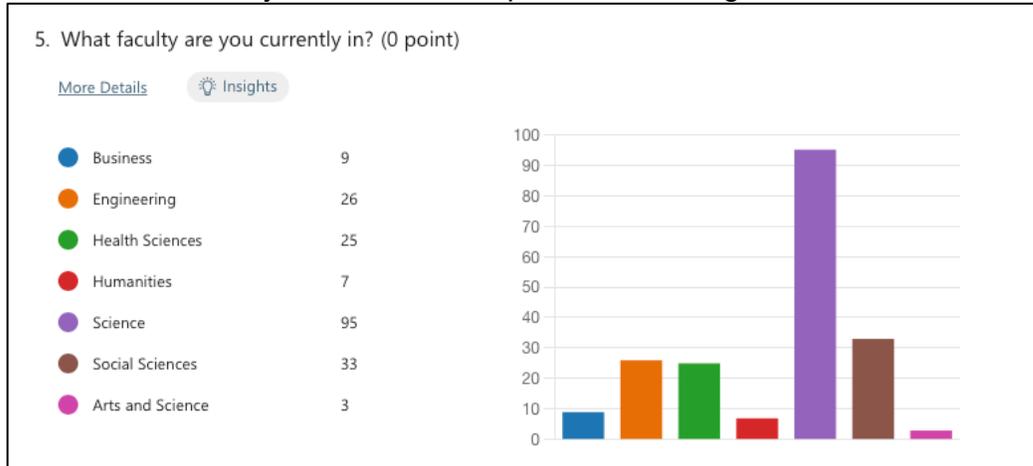
Spark has been facing the following challenges:

- **First Year Formal Ticket Sales:** Spark ticket sale went live on October 7, 2022, on MSU Storefront. Despite our numerous promotional efforts (i.e., MUSC banner, iPad giveaway, and social media promotion), the rate of ticket sales has been incredibly discouraging. While our goal is to sell 500 tickets, we have only sold ~70 tickets with only three weeks remaining of the ticket sale period. We are planning to launch a second wave of promotional content on our social media, including the theme reveal for the formal. My hope is that the event gains traction through this second social media campaign. Any suggestions on additional measures we can take would be much appreciated!
- **MUSC Room Bookings:** Booking rooms in MUSC for weekly sessions has been an incredibly time-consuming and taxing process. Given that Spark is only allocated three hours of MUSC booking time per week, it is not possible for us to accommodate 18 session groups, which would warrant a total of 18 hours of booking each week. Thus, we had to reach out to other MSU Services to borrow their booking hours. This was a challenging process due to the many back-and-forth email coordination required with the other Services, which further delayed the entire process. For second semester, we are hoping that Spark can acquire more MUSC booking hours to further facilitate the process of sessions room booking. If this is not a possibility, we are also considering booking rooms in other campus buildings.
- **Sessions Coordinators' Access to Committee Room:** Spark's Sessions Coordinators (Deeptha, Nick, and Tuqa) are responsible for packing the session bags with the materials needed for the week's activities. Given that all of Spark's supplies and bags are located in the Committee Room cabinets, the Sessions Coordinators spend several hours in the space to complete this task. However, when they arrange to meet outside of MSU working hours, they can only enter the room if me or the Assistant Director (Abithiny) lets them in using our access cards. This has posed a couple minor issues thus far, particularly when neither one of us were on campus to let the Sessions Coordinators into the Committee Room. Though this is not a priority, it would be convenient if the Sessions

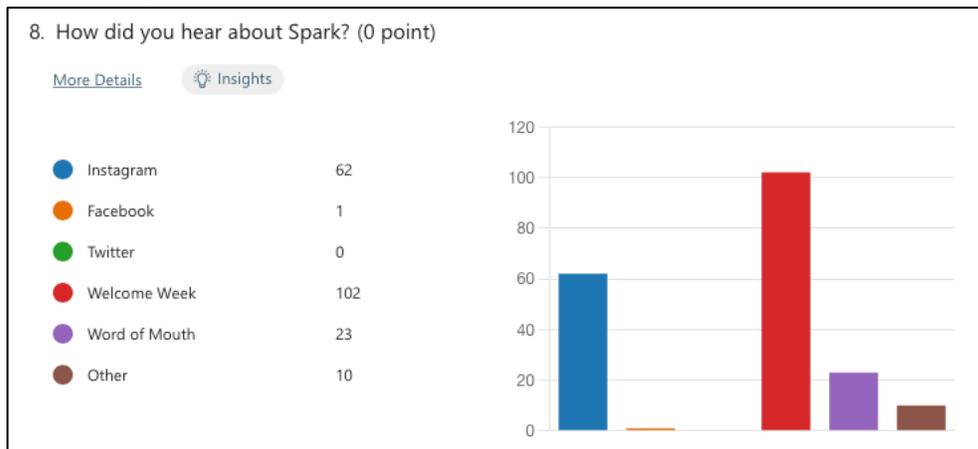
Coordinators are provided with their own access card for the Committee Room as they use the space the most among all the Spark Executives.

Miscellaneous

Below is the faculty distribution of Spark session registrants:



Below is a screenshot that showcases how session registrants found out about the Service:



Below are some of the team photos we took:

