



REPORT

From the office of the...

Spark Director

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Kyobin Hwang (She/Her)
SUBJECT: Spark Report 8
DATE: March 13, 2023

Year Plan Update

Over the past month, Spark has been focusing on continuing our winter semester programming and preparing to wrap up the year. As a team, we reached the following milestones and goals:

1. Spark has officially opened its application for the Spark Achievement in Leadership Award. We have started to receive applications as well!
2. Ahead of Valentine's Day, Spark executed the Spark Your Heart event. With cookie decorating, button making, and candy grams, we attracted a total of 88 individuals at the event.
3. The Promotions and Publication Coordinators have launched the winter publication earlier this March. With 292 likes and 76 saves, the publication on McMaster University's Meal Plans provided incredibly useful insight to the student population.
4. Spark has successfully selected its incoming Director and is in the process of hiring the Assistant Director.

Events, Projects, & Activities

General Service Usage

Relative to the previous EB Report period, service usage has remained stable. Namely, we had over 80 students attend the Valentine's Event hosted by our Events Coordinators. Furthermore, we have been gaining many more social media followers after the launch of our winter publication, as well as Instagram reel on housing in collaboration with the MSU Communications Team. Finally, Spark is approaching the tail end of the weekly sessions program. We are currently on the seventh week of sessions and we have around 40 first years consistently accessing our weekly mentorship program. While this is a decrease in numbers relative to the beginning of the year, we are incredibly proud of the student retention from first term.

Projects & Events: Project 1 (Completed) – Spark Winter Publication

- The Promotions and Publication Coordinators (Jadyn and Linda) worked diligently on Spark's second publication of the year.
- The publication launched on March 2, 2023.

- With 292 likes and 76 saves, the publication was a huge success!
- The topic is McMaster University's meal plans, and the goal is to inform students of the differences between each meal plan branch, as well as off-campus vendors to which their meal plan applies (e.g., BarBurrito, Boston Pizza, Pinks, Pita n' More, Popeyes, Quik Chik, etc.).

Projects & Events: Project 2 (Completed) – Spark Your Heart Event

- The Event Coordinators (Anika, Daniel, and Myra) and Spark Events Committee planned a valentine's theme event.
- There were cookie decorating, pin and bracelet making, candy grams, and valentine's day origami.
- This event was executed on February 9, 6:00PM-8:00PM, at KTH B105.
- With 73 registrants, we had 88 students at the event.
- Many Team Leaders were also keen to help with the event. Specifically, we had 14 Team Leaders attend at various points to help out and enjoy their time.

Projects & Events: Project 3 (Completed) – MSU Communications Team x Spark Housing Reel, "What's Good, McMaster" Series

- Spark collaborated with the MSU Communications Team for an Instagram reel focused on housing.
- Given that many first-year students are currently in the process of looking for houses, we thought it may be valuable to share some house hunting tips and tricks in the form of a reel.
- The reel was premised around interviewing McMaster University students, asking them questions pertaining to housing.
- Below are the questions that were asked to McMaster students:
 - What are your go-to platforms for finding a student house?
 - How did you find your current student house?
 - What is one piece of advice you would give to students currently looking for housing?
 - What is something new you learned through house hunting?
 - What's the most important thing to look for in a student house?
 - What is an important thing to consider when searching for roommates?
- The reel features one of our Promotions and Publications Coordinators (Jadyn) and Marketing and Communications Assistant (Hayley Ma).
- It was posted on February 27, 2023, and amassed 9894 views, 262 likes, and 14 saves.
- It was definitely an effective means to inform the broader McMaster community about the Service.

Projects & Events: Project 4 (Completed) – Winter Term Photos

- With the start of a new semester, we took another round of team photo.
- All Team Leaders and Executive members were invited to waterfall room on February 7, 2023, with their Spark apparel.

- The Communications Officer, Will Dang, kindly took our photos.
- I have inserted some of our beautiful photos in the “Miscellaneous” section of the report.

Projects & Events: Project 5 (Ongoing) – Winter Sessions

- Despite our overall registration number of 120, we currently have around 40 first-years students consistently attending sessions.
- The topics that are covered through winter sessions include the following: *Expectation Setting, Teamwork and Collaboration, Introduction to House Hunting, Hidden Gems on McMaster Campus, Positive Thinking, Culinary Skills 101, Goal Setting, Discover Your City.*
- For the “Culinary Skills 101” session, we collaborated with the Food Collective Centre.
 - Specifically, first-year students had a chance to learn and practice their culinary skills within their sessions.
- As of this week, Spark would have administered seven out of eight winter sessions. We are nearing the end of this program.
- The week of March 13 also marks the last week of sessions training for the Team Leaders. It has been an absolute joy learning alongside them!

Projects & Events: Project 6 (Ongoing) – 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 an opportunity to create some of Spark’s winter programming.
- Below is the logistics with second semester’s Ambassador program that is running between the week of February 6 – March 20:
 - *Outreach Coordinators:*
 - Week 1: Winter Intro to Spark Ambassadors Session
 - *Events Coordinators:*
 - Week 2: Talking about what a good event looks like, brainstorming events
 - Week 3: Planning logistics, starting to put event plan together
 - Week 4: Implementing and promoting event
 - Be at the event helping out and stuff
 - *Sessions Coordinators:*
 - Week 5: Bag packing
 - *Director and Assistant Director:*
 - Week 6: Join a Spark executive meeting
- To mark the end of their program, the Spark Ambassadors team will be joining our executive meeting on Sunday, March 19, 7:00PM-8:00PM. We are excited to meet them and give a glimpse into all the hard work behind the scenes.

Projects & Events: Project 7 (Ongoing) – Sessions and Events Committee

- The Session and Events Coordinators have been working with their subcommittees to prepare winter semester's programming.
- Both committees are comprised of Team Leaders that were interested in undertaking additional responsibilities by helping with either event or session planning.
- Sessions Committee has planned Session 5 and 7, which are focused on positive thinking and goal setting, respectively.
- Events Committee organized a Valentines event on February 9, 2023, which included activities such as speed friending, cookie decorating, and a candy gram.
- The Events Committee is currently planning a "RATical Self-Love" event, which is a self-care event with movies, snacks, and craft stations.
 - This event is scheduled to take place on Thursday, March 23, 6:00PM-8:00PM.
- Both committees seem enthusiastic about their roles and have brought forth insightful ideas. I am incredibly proud of all they have achieved!

Projects & Events: Project 8 (Upcoming) – RATical Self-Love Event

- The Events Coordinators and Events Committee have been planning a self-care event, "RATical Self-Love," scheduled to occur on Thursday, March 23, between 6:00PM-8:00PM.
- While watching the movie "Ratatouille," first year students will have a chance to craft (e.g., tote bag painting, lip balm making, hot chocolate kit making, and button making) and enjoy some popcorn.
- This event is still in the planning stages.
- Next steps on my end entail submitting EOHSS form, booking forms, submitting PO, and purchasing the materials needed for the event.

Projects & Events: Project 9 (Upcoming) – Second Winter Publication

- Even though the Promotions and Publication Coordinators have released the required number of publications indicated in their Job Description, they expressed interest in releasing a third publication in the coming month.
- They are keen to capitalize on the remaining money in their budget line by releasing a publication on how to navigate instances of lost items on campus.
- Many individuals, including myself, was not aware of the lost item reporting system at McMaster University.
- Thus, by releasing this publication, the Promotions and Publication Coordinators' goal is to hopefully offer resources to alleviate the stress that comes from losing one's possession on campus.

Projects & Events: Project 10 (Upcoming) – Spark Achievement in Leadership Award

- We have officially started accepting applications for the Spark Achievement in Leadership Award.

- We have promoted the scholarship internally.
- Similar to last year, the scholarship is valued at \$200 and will be awarded to two (2) first-year students registered in Spark Sessions who demonstrate growth in their leadership skills throughout the year and who help 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 is an application process for first years to apply for the Spark Scholarship, which allow them to reflect on their growth within the Service. All applications will be verified by one of the first year's TLs.
- The process of implementing this scholarship has been smoother this year as it has been included as an official Spark budget line (6101-0125 – SPARK SCHOLARSHIP).

Projects & Events: Project 11 (Upcoming) – Spark Stars

- While the Spark Scholarship is an excellent initiative to recognize students that demonstrate a passion and commitment for Spark, it is only awarded to two first years among a large pool of qualified candidates.
- Thus, I wanted to implement an initiative like Spark Stars where more students could be recognized for their commitment.
- Spark Stars was designed to curb the low second semester retention rates.
- This is the first time we are executing this program.
- Students have been receiving a star for each event or session they attend
- Depending on the number of stars accumulated by students at the end of the year, they will be able to exchange their stars for gifts of varying value (e.g., Spark sticker, lanyard, tote bag, a campus store gift card, etc.).
- The Outreach and Engagement Coordinators have been using the remaining funds acquired from campus sponsors to purchase gifts for Spark Stars.
- I look forward to seeing the outcome of this new initiative!

Outreach & Promotions

Summary

The main promotional focus over the past two months has been promoting for winter sessions attendance internally. Specifically, to retain the first-year students registered in winter sessions, the Promotions and Publications Coordinators have been disseminating weekly graphics featuring the session theme and activities for the week. In doing so, they have been able to build excitement among the first-year students and encourage them to upkeep their weekly attendance. Furthermore, we have promoted the Spark Your Heart event, winter publication, and Spark Assistant Director hiring post. We employed various outreach and promotional strategies. Namely, we promoted via the residence TV screens, previous Spark contacts, and social media graphics as well as reels. A

combination of these strategies has shown to be incredibly effectively in gaining traction on our promotional content. Prospective promotional efforts will be centered around Spark's final event (i.e., RATical Self-Love Event), last publication, and Executive hiring for the 2023-2024 team.

Promotional Materials

MSU Communications Team x Spark Housing Reel



Plays: 9896

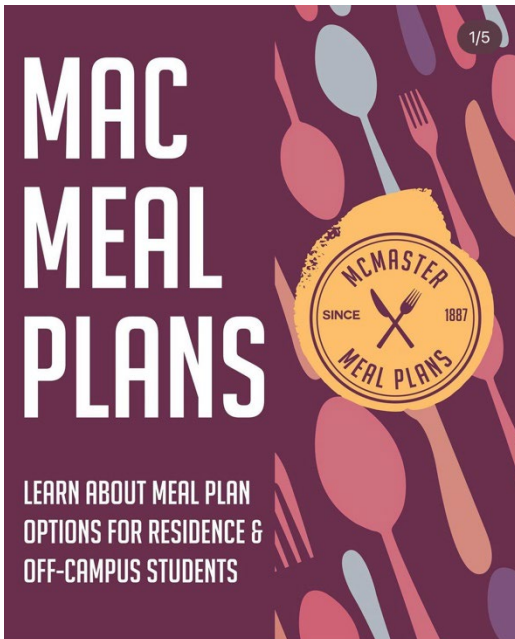
Likes: 262

Sends: 32

Saves: 14

Reach: 7004

Winter Publication: McMaster University's Meal Plans



Likes: 292

Sends: 83

Saves: 76

Reach: 4496

Social Media Engagement since the Previous Report

Instagram (February-March, since previous report)

Overview	
Visit Insights regularly to check on your content's performance.	
Accounts reached	4,991 -6% >
Accounts engaged	409 +5.1% >
Total followers	6,110 -- >

Facebook (since previous report)

Post reach 883 -35% <small>from previous 28 days</small>	Engagement 45 -68% <small>from previous 28 days</small>
Impressions 1.2K -38% <small>from previous 28 days</small>	Net followers -2 -300% <small>from previous 28 days</small>

Finances

Budget Summary

This past month, Spark's expenses have been sourced from the Annual Campaign (6103-0125) and Advertising and Promotions (6501-0125) budget lines. Specifically, we had to pull from the Annual Campaign line to purchase winter session materials, while the Advertising and Promotions budget line was used to generate graphics for the winter publication. The next large expense would be from the Annual Campaigns budget line (#6103-0125) to purchase materials for our RATical Self-Love event and Discover Your City session, where we would need to pull \$480.00.

ACCOUNT CODE	ITEM	BUDGET / COST
5003-0125	SPARK – OFFICE SUPPLIES	100
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$45.61
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$54.39
6103-0125	SPARK – ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS	3,700
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$1273.18
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$2426.82
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	\$3055.03
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$444.97
TOTALS		
TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		\$8250.00
TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		\$4884.35
REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		\$3365.65

Executives & Volunteers

Undoubtedly, Spark volunteers, including the executive team and Team Leaders, have worked incredibly hard. Spark is not a small commitment by any means as it warrants year-long commitment for duties that can be time-consuming. The positive impact of the Service on the first-year student body is only possible due to the volunteers that devote their time and skills—they are truly the backbone of Spark. Recognizing this, the Assistant Director and I are currently in the process of organizing an end-of-year social and volunteer appreciation event (i.e., closing ceremony) to express our gratitude for their contribution and celebrate everything we have accomplished as a team this year. We will also be giving them a tangible gift as a way to express our gratitude.

Successes

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

- Executives Going Above and Beyond Within Their Roles:** Each Executive role’s Job Description clearly outlines the duties that are expected of them. In the case of Events Coordinators, they are responsible for “overseeing the planning of four (4) first-year workshops throughout the year.” The Events Coordinators have exceeded the number of events they were required to plan. Despite already fulfilling their minimum requirements, their passion for first-year success through event-planning has led them to execute additional events for in the McMaster University community. Likewise, the Promotions and Publications Coordinators are expected to release two publications in a year, but in light of the remaining budget, they have been keen to release a third publication focused on navigating instances of misplacing personal belonging on campus. I am incredibly grateful to be working with Executives that not only fulfill their responsibilities but go above and beyond within their roles. I learned a lot from working with them!
- Spark Your Heart Event Turnout:** I was incredibly satisfied with the turnout at the Spark Your Heart Event. I watched the Events Coordinators

and Events Committee diligently plan the event; thus, it was rewarding to see such excellent turnout. With over 80 individuals at the event, there were ample opportunities to socialize and form connections with others in the community.

- **Spark Stars Fruition:** Coming into the Spark Director role, Spark Stars was an initiative I was keen to implement. While the Spark Achievement in Leadership is an excellent means to recognize students that demonstrate a passion and commitment for Spark, it is only awarded to two first years among a large pool of qualified candidates. Thus, I wanted to implement an initiative like Spark Stars where more students could be recognized for their commitment. With the support and leadership of the Outreach and Engagement Coordinators my ideas are becoming closer towards reality. We are currently in the process of purchasing the various gifts for the first-year students.
- **Spark Yearbook:** This year, the Promotions and Publications Coordinators decided to create a Yearbook capturing all of Spark's moments. As we near the end of the year, the pages in the yearbook are mostly filled. I am grateful to have this to always look back on and relive the beautiful memories created within my time in Spark.
- **Sessions Coordinators Committee Room Access:** I have mentioned this success in a previous EB Report, but I want to reiterate how convenient it has been to provide the Sessions Coordinators with official access to the Committee Room. A primary component of their role involves packing session bags on a weekly basis. This responsibility would have been challenging to fulfill if they did not have their own Committee Room access card, as they would have had to coordinate with my schedule. Furthermore, the Sessions Coordinators have to administer Team Leader training on a weekly basis. As such, having a guaranteed quiet and private space on campus, like the Committee Room, where they can prepare for the training has been incredibly helpful for them. With all this in mind, I suggest granting Sessions Coordinators with Committee Room access for years to come by officially integrating it into their Job Description.

Current Challenges

Spark has been facing the following challenges:

- **Discover Your City Cash Handling:** Over the week of March 20, we will be running our traditional Discover Your City session. This will involve pulling \$480 in cash from our Annual Campaigns budget line and distributing \$30 to each session group. Given the large cash sum

warranted by the session, I would feel uncomfortable freely leaving it in the Committee Room. I recognize that I can always lock the Committee Room lockers and pass the keys to the Executive-on-Call for each session, but this runs the risk of misplacing the keys. As such, I am currently thinking of asking the Office Clerk to assist with the cash distribution process (e.g., when the Exec-on-Call approaches, the Exec-on-Call can provide them with \$60 each). While I am still thinking through the logistics, any guidance on the process would be much appreciated.

- **Volunteer Appreciation Gifts:** This year, we are hoping to gift Spark Volunteers crewnecks as a way to express our gratitude. Unfortunately, our remaining budget within the Volunteer Appreciation line does not cover the cost of the crewnecks. To execute our plan, we would need to pull \$700 from the Annual Campaigns budget line. Alternatively, if we charge each Team Leader \$5.00 for the crewneck, we will only need to pull \$400 from the Annual Campaigns line to make this work. I am currently consulting with VP Finance to reach a sound decision.
- **Team Leader Job Description Fulfillment:** In addition to leading weekly sessions, Team Leaders are also responsible for volunteering at a minimum of two events throughout the year. While we have had Team Leaders fulfilling their sessions requirement, many have neglected the event-facilitation aspect of their role. The Assistant Director and I have implemented several measures to encourage Team Leaders to volunteer at events. Specifically, we have created and disseminated an “Events Tracker” spreadsheet that flags Team Leaders that are yet to meet their event requirements. For the final two events, we are planning to only open the volunteer opportunity to those that have yet to complete their event requirement. Any other guidance on navigating this challenge would be much appreciated!

Miscellaneous



