



REPORT

From the office of the...

Spark Director

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Serena Bansal
SUBJECT: Spark Report #3
DATE: August 10th, 2023

Yearplan Update

Hi Executive Board Members! I'd like to start by introducing myself, I'm Serena, and I'll be taking over as Spark Director for the rest of the year! These past 2 weeks have been a significant transition period for the service as I find my footing and figure out how to best guide and support our executive team. I am immensely grateful to our previous Director, Deeptha and AD, Avery, for all their advice and guidance, as well as the executive team for their support and patience as I navigate the transition into this role. Amongst this transition, I am proud to say that my AD and executive team have been working extremely hard to make progress on their respective projects within the year plan.

Since our previous report, we've completed TL hiring, with all 37 candidates who were given offers accepting the position! Our Summer Programming is also in progress, with our Faculty Fest Webinars completed on July 29th and 30th, and the upcoming Sites & Services Webinar happening on August 13th. We also have TL Training & Orientation coming up this Sunday, August 13th, where we hope to build a sense of community by giving the TLs a chance to get to know each other and the executive team, as well as introducing them to Spark and their responsibilities as TLs! Finally, we are in the process of planning Night Before Classes on Labour Day and reaching out to faculty Welcome Week planners to feature Spark at their events in order to increase our presence and build momentum for Sessions registration at the beginning of September.

Events, Projects, & Activities

General Service Usage

Spark has not yet commenced formal usage. We are currently conducting our Summer Programming initiative, which allows first years to engage with our service, and will soon begin planning the launch of Fall Sessions.

Projects & Events: Team Leader (TL) Hiring (Complete)

- This was the last initiative completed under the leadership of our previous director, Deeptha, so I can't take credit for how successfully this was executed!
- Since our last report, we have sent offers out to 37 TL candidates, all of whom accepted! We are very excited to work with a team of volunteers who we feel demonstrated a strong passion for first year mentorship in their written applications and interviews. 6 of our executives have also expressed interest in being TLs for sessions throughout the year.
- Through the implementation of the TL Rep Hiring Initiative, we were able to hire TLs from a host of different programs. We have representation from 12 programs (life sciences gateway, health sciences, humanities, kinesiology, engineering, computer science, medical radiation sciences, social sciences, nursing, commerce, arts & science, integrated science), which is amazing to see given Spark's goal of serving first years from all programs across the university. We hope to see gains from this initiative in terms of reaching a broader first year audience come Sessions registration time.
- Since I've taken up this position, we have been short one Sessions Coordinator. After consulting with the current Sessions Coordinators, Ellen and Sri, and others who have previously held the position, we decided to hire another Sessions Coordinator, who interviewed for the position. This individual will be transitioning from the TL role to an executive position, leaving us with 36 TLs in total.
- Out of our 36 finalized TLs, only 3 are returning TLs from previous years. We are excited to welcome so many new volunteers to the service, but with a large proportion of new TLs, we anticipate having to provide additional support and guidance as they become acquainted with the service, which we will be conscientious of during TL Training & Orientation.

Projects & Events: Summer Programing (On-Going)

- Summer programming is well underway, with one set of webinars, Faculty Fest, completed, and the other, Sites & Services, happening this coming Sunday.
- We had 107 registrations and ~50 attendees for the Faculty Fest webinars. The attendees seemed quite engaged, asking presenters from their respective faculties questions about electives, specializations, and opportunities to get involved, amongst other things.
- We have 77 students already registered for the Sites & Services webinar. We're hoping that involvement of the other services, executives, and TL team in spreading the word by resharing our Instagram post and reels will further increase registration.

- We decided not to record the webinars for privacy reasons (to make sure students were comfortable with asking their questions) but did forward the specific faculty slide decks to all attendees in our thank you emails.
- A big thank you goes out to our Events Coordinator, Ashley, who has been spearheading this initiative, for coordinating with all the faculties and services involved and moderating the webinars, as well as Promotions & Publications Coordinators, Linda and Katie, for creating all the interactive promotional material!

Projects & Events: Team Leader Training & Orientation (On-Going)

- TL Training & Orientation is taking place this Sunday, August 13th, over Zoom. In the past, TL Training has been compounded with the first Sessions training in early September. However, we decided to hold this in mid-August so TLs can become acquainted with each other and get to know about their roles and responsibilities ahead of the school year!
- Here is a brief summary of what we will be covering:

6:00pm – 6:20pm:	Welcome, introductions, and icebreakers
6:20pm – 6:40pm:	Intro to Spark, the executive team, and co-ship committees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During this time, we will introduce to TLs that they have the option to join a committee, and each of the committee executives will share what their committee will be working on throughout the year.
6:40pm – 7:00pm:	Overview of the TL role, goals, expectations, and community norms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will include an overview of the various programs that Spark runs (e.g. Spark Stars, Spark Ambassadors, etc.). • We will also discuss Spark’s upcoming role in Welcome Week and how students can get involved (e.g. attending various Faculty Fairs, Night Before Classes event, etc.).
7:00pm – 7:20pm:	Practicing situationals
7:20pm – 7:30pm:	Wrap up, action items, and questions

- This will be the first time all the TLs will be meeting each other, so we want to ensure this experience is very positive and has them excited about the year ahead! We will be putting a large focus on making sure Training & Orientation is interactive and engaging, especially since it will be virtual, by making time for icebreakers, introducing the executive team, and practicing how to address potential situations that may arise as a TL.
- We will also be introducing TLs to the various committees they can join: Events, Sessions, Outreach & Engagement (newly introduced this year), and Promotions & Publications (newly introduced this year). We anticipate a large interest in the two previously established committees, so we are considering implementing a system for TLs to rank their committees of interest, rather than selecting only one, to ensure that the executives running the other two committees receive support as well.

- This is mandatory for all TLs to attend. However, in recognition of prior commitments and the fact that this is a busy time of year for many, we will be sending all those who are unable to attend a recording of the session with a quiz to ensure they are familiar with the content presented.

Projects & Events: Night Before Classes and Welcome Week Presence (Upcoming)

- Welcome Week and the beginning of the school year is a crucial time for us to inform first years about our service, so our Outreach and Engagement Coordinators, Nick and Simran, have been working hard to contact all the faculties to arrange booths at their events. So far, we have secured a spot in BHSc's Faculty Day Clubs and Services Fair.
- Planning for Night Before Classes, also led by our Outreach and Engagement Coordinators, is well underway. The event will take place on September 4th. We are in the process of booking the space outside of MUSC as a "homebase" where executives, TLs, and first years will meet and come back to after their tours.
 - Given the drop-in nature of this event and its popularity last year, we are trying to figure out how to best bring students to locations of their interest efficiently with a limited number of volunteers facilitating the tours.

Projects & Events: First Year Formal (Upcoming)

- Our Events Coordinators, Ethan and Yaseen, have been spearheading First Year Formal planning. As mentioned in our last report, we have 'First Hold' status on CIBC hall for November 24th from 7pm-12am.
- To maximize capacity of CIBC hall, we have decided to serve an array of appetizers and finger foods in a buffet style, rather than a sit-down dinner. We're planning to have some high-top tables spread out on the sides of the hall and a dance floor in the middle. We are in the process of determining the costs associated with this style of venue arrangement.
- We are currently brainstorming potential theme ideas with the input of our executive team. We also hope to gather ideas from the TLs and the First Year Council Coordinator before making a final decision.
- One challenge we anticipated running into was determining the role of FYC in planning the formal. We would love for FYC to be involved in the planning process, but we are aiming to begin ticket sales by mid-September, and thus must determine logistics and associated costs prior to this. We have reached out to the new FYC Coordinator to discuss how to best involve FYC in the process, given the later start of their term.

Outreach & Promotions

Summary

Since our last report, all our social media promotion has been dedicated towards Summer Programming (Faculty Fest and Sites & Services webinars). We have been able to garner a greater reach by having other MSU services and executives reshare our promotional materials. Ever since hiring our TL team, we've been encouraging them to reshare our promotional materials, especially within first year communities. We've found that our short video content (Instagram reels), featuring presenters and representatives from different faculties and services, has been quite effective in increasing engagement, gathering over 10,000 views each and reaching new audiences that do not already follow our account!

Promotional Materials

Faculty Fest Reels:

- <https://www.instagram.com/p/CvGYk5tMzy-/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/p/CvLAqxNpxnW/>

Sites & Services Reel:

- <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cvnzx8wJP1g/>

Summer Programming Posts:

The image shows a screenshot of a Carrd website titled "Spark Presents... Sparking into First Year". The website is for "msuspark.carrd.co" and features a "FACULTY FEST" event on Saturday, July 29th, and "SUNDAY, JULY 30TH" programming. The Faculty Fest includes an overview of the faculty, a chance to meet upper years, and ask questions about academics, specializations, and getting involved. The event is sponsored by Campus Store and The Phoenix. The website also lists various academic programs and their times for the following day.

Spark Presents...
Sparkling into First Year

WEBINARS FACULTY FEST

msuspark.carrd.co

FACULTY FEST

JOIN US FOR AN OVERVIEW OF YOUR FACULTY! MEET UPPER YEARS AND ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT ACADEMICS, SPECIALIZATIONS, GETTING INVOLVED, AND SO MUCH MORE!

SATURDAY, JULY 29TH

NURSING - 12:00-1:00 PM EST
HUMANITIES - 1:10-2:10 PM EST
BHSC - 2:20-3:20 PM EST
INDIGENOUS STUDIES - 3:30-4:30 PM EST
SOCIAL SCIENCES - 4:40-5:40 PM EST

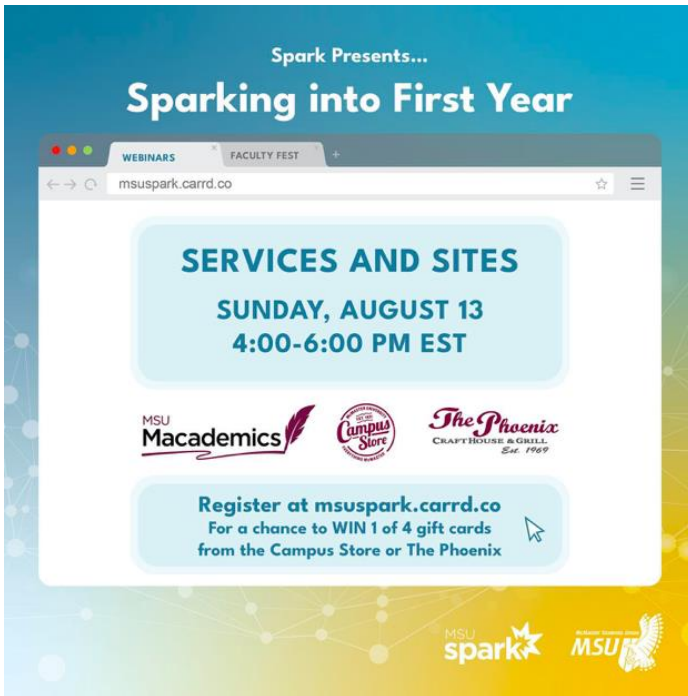
SUNDAY, JULY 30TH

ENGINEERING - 12:00-1:00 PM EST
KINESIOLOGY - 1:10-2:10 PM EST
ARTS AND SCIENCE - 2:20-3:20 PM EST
SCIENCE - 3:30-4:30 PM EST
COMMERCE - 4:40-5:40 PM EST

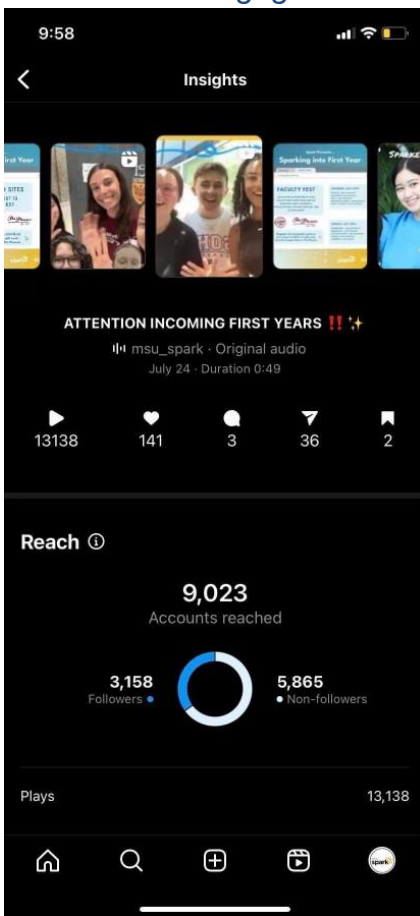
Register at msuspark.carrd.co
For a chance to WIN 1 of 4 gift cards from the Campus Store or The Phoenix

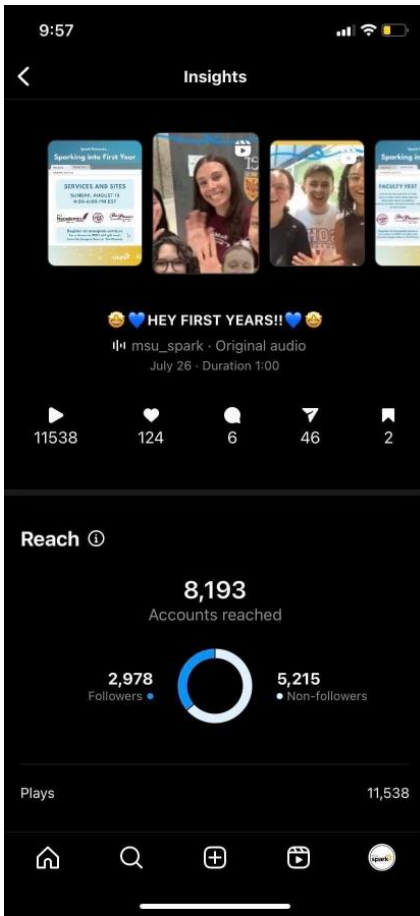
Campus Store
The Phoenix CRAFTHOUSE & GRILL. Est. 1969

MSU spark MSU



Social Media Engagement since the Previous Report





Finances

Budget Summary

Since our last report, we have placed orders for physical promotional materials from the Underground, including 500 stickers (\$197) and 500 rave cards (\$150). We have also ordered 400 buttons (\$116) to hand out to first years who register and attend the first Session in September. We are in the process of ordering t-shirts for our TL and executive teams to wear when representing Spark during Welcome Week and future events.

ACCOUNT CODE	ITEM	BUDGET / COST
5003-0125	OFFICE SUPPLIES	50
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	0
	REMAINING IN LINE	50
6103-0125	ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS	3700
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	0

	REMAINING IN LINE	3700
6494-0125	VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION	400
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	100
	REMAINING IN LINE	300
6501-0125	ADV & PROMOTION	3600
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	563
	REMAINING IN LINE	3037
6802-0125	LEADER TRAINING	500
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	0
	REMAINING IN LINE	500
TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		8250
TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		663
REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		7587

Executives & Volunteers

- Morale amongst the executives has been considerably high, despite the transition we have just gone through. I am very impressed with how they've managed to consistently make progress on their projects and initiatives throughout this period. I'm also very thankful to my AD, Avery, for taking on the extra responsibility during the week that our service did not have an active director, especially after just coming out of TL hiring and moving into TL Training & Orientation.
- Given that I've only been in this role for a little over a week, I can tell that the executives are naturally still adjusting to this change. They currently seem to be primarily reaching out to Avery for support, which is completely fine; I just don't want her to get overwhelmed with this especially now that we've hired our TL team and she'll be acting as the first point of contact for them. I think with enough time, they will begin feeling comfortable asking me for help and support as well, which I have been actively encouraging them to do.
- Avery and I will be putting extra attention into ensuring that our new executive team member settles well into her new role during the next few weeks. We want to ensure that she feels fully comfortable in asking us for support and that she knows she's an extremely valued member of our Spark family!
- I plan to continue the 1-on-1 check-ins initiative in mid/late August, or potentially in September, depending on the executives' availability during

this upcoming busy time of Welcome Week and the start of the school year.

- Since hiring our TL team, TLs have been relatively active in our main communication channel, our Facebook messenger group chat, expressing excitement to work with each other!
- We expect that morale amongst volunteers will significantly increase after they have the chance to get to know each other during TL Training & Orientation. We will also be creating a Facebook group for TLs and executives to post more about themselves in order to build camaraderie amongst the team as a whole.

Successes

- **Team Leader Hiring:** The executives put a lot of hard work and long hours into making TL hiring a success, all the way from creating application/interview questions, to marking written applications, and facilitating and evaluating interviews. We are very proud and grateful for all of their effort and dedication! We are also really excited about the range of programs from which we've hired TLs this year and believe this will really help more first years find value in Spark's services. Finally, we've received a lot of positive feedback regarding our interview process from TL candidates, which is truly a testament to the hard work that everyone on the team put into this process.
- **Summer Programing:** As seen with the screenshots of our social media engagement, as well as webinar registration and attendance, Summer Programing has been progressing well! It was a challenging process for our Events Coordinators to get into contact and coordinate with representatives from 10 different programs and 6 services, but they've done a splendid job! We're excited to see the outcome and feedback from the Sites & Services webinar.

Current Challenges

- Undoubtedly, the biggest challenge I've been facing is adjusting to this new role. We're coming up on a busy time for Spark, with Welcome Week just around the corner, followed by Sessions registration. I want to ensure that I'm comfortable with all aspects of this role so that we're able to execute our upcoming initiatives successfully and I can best support my team throughout it all!
- We're having some trouble figuring out how to ensure that we'll have enough TLs volunteering at Night Before Classes. Based on last year's turnout (~300), we again expect many first years to attend, so we want to make sure we have enough TL volunteers present to guide them around campus. In the past, we have set minimum requirements for how many events TLs must volunteer at in each semester (e.g. 2 in the Fall and 1 in the Winter). However, even with this requirement, we do not think we will

have enough volunteers present at Night Before Classes, along with Welcome Week booths, and all other events during the year.

Miscellaneous

Once again, I wanted to say a big thank you to everyone who has helped show me the ropes and answer my questions, I really appreciate it!