



REPORT

From the office of the...

Spark Director

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Serena Bansal
SUBJECT: Spark Report #4
DATE: October 2, 2023

Yearplan Update

Hi Executive Board Members! During Welcome Week and with the beginning of the fall semester, Spark has reached many goals outlined in our year plan by spreading awareness about our service amongst first-year students and commencing our main programming. Throughout Welcome Week, we were part of various Faculty Fests, which allowed our Team Leaders and Executives to gather interest in Spark from many different faculties. We also ran our Night Before Classes event to show first-year students where their classes are located on campus, which was a big success and had a large turnout! Our main objective of outreach during Welcome Week and the month of September was to encourage registration for Spark Sessions, our weekly mentorship program. Through various social media and outreach initiatives, we were able to reach high registration numbers and attendance at weekly sessions has been promising.

Events, Projects, & Activities

General Service Usage

Spark Sessions officially began this week, meaning our service usage is now in full swing. We had 142 students register for Spark Sessions this semester, spanning 8 different programs, with roughly 8-9 Sparklings (first-year students) assigned to each Sessions group. At the time this report is being written, we are halfway through the first week of Sessions. While it is still early on in the semester, attendance has been around 70% higher this year compared to this time last year, which is a significant improvement!

Projects & Events: Welcome Week Presence (Complete)

- Being a service focused on first-year students, Welcome Week presents a very valuable opportunity for Spark to connect and engage with first-year students. Throughout the week, the Spark team, both Executives and

Team Leaders made a strong effort to spread the word about Spark Sessions programming and our service as a whole.

- Our Outreach and Engagement Coordinators (Nick and Simran) reached out the faculties and Spark was present at 4 Faculty Fest events: Engineering, Science, Social Science, and Health Science. Based on the information we collected in our Sessions registration form, around a third of the students heard about Sessions from our Welcome Week presence.
- Spark was also present at the Maroons' Meet the Services event, where students were able to learn more about Spark services.
- We launched our Welcome Week Instagram giveaway contest, where we encouraged students to take a photo with our Spark signs and follow our Instagram account for a chance to win some Spark merch. We gained around 150 followers on our Instagram account from this initiative.
- Since a significant portion of our team being involved in Welcome Week in other capacities (as CAs, faculty reps, Maroons, residence reps), I was initially concerned about how we would coordinate our presence at all these events, sometimes happening simultaneously. However, it was truly amazing to see how much effort our Executives and Team Leaders put into showing up and actively engaging with first-years throughout the week. They were absolutely incredible in supporting Spark, each other, and myself and Avery!

Projects & Events: Night Before Classes (Complete)

- Night Before Classes is an event that aims to help students ease into their first week of school by having Team Leaders accompany them to their specific classrooms. This event was organized by our Outreach and Engagement Coordinators (Nick and Simran), who did an excellent job!
- We had a large turnout of around 150-175 attendees at this event. Given that last year, turnout was significantly greater than expected, we had around 24 Team Leaders and 5 Executives present. We found that this ratio of Team Leaders/Executives to first-years worked out really well, ensuring that our group sizes were manageable for volunteers and there were minimal first-years waiting for a tour.
- We used the MUSC/Mills Plaza for the event, which helped bring in many students who were previously unaware of the event. We also had snacks for first-years and Team Leaders to enjoy!

Projects & Events: Spark Sessions Registration (Complete)

- Gathering first-year registration for fall Spark Sessions was our main priority throughout September. Our presence during Welcome Week and ClubsFest was really helpful in giving us the opportunity to get the word out about Sessions. At CA Training, we got to Throughout this time, we handed out physical promotional materials, mainly our rave cards, with a QR code to the form to register for Sessions.

- Our Promotions and Publications Coordinators (Linda and Katie) worked hard to launch a “Sparked at Mac” Instagram campaign, featuring testimonials from past Sparklings about their experiences with the program. They also created an Instagram reel with Spark Executives and Team Leaders based on a fun social media trend “red flag/green flag” to offer an insight into the value of Spark Sessions, which garnered a lot of engagement.
- Our Outreach and Engagement Coordinators (Nick and Simran), put a lot of effort into reaching out to professors teaching large and popular first year classes. Through their efforts, Spark Executives had the opportunity to speak about fall Spark Sessions to 2 classes of PSYCH 1X03 (~400 students each). We also had our Sessions registration graphic posted on the Avenue to Learn classrooms of PSYCH 1X03, SOCSCI 1T03, and KINESIOL 1A03.
- Having many CAs on our Executive team was very valuable for outreach as well (since first-years live on residence). They encouraged other CAs to let their students know about Spark Sessions and handed out rave cards at their residence buildings. We also had the Residence Life Instagram page, which is followed by many first-year students, repost our Sessions registration graphic.
- This year, we implemented some minor initiatives to help encourage the first-year students who registered for Sessions actually come out to their first Session. We sent out an email to all the Sessions registrants, welcoming them to the program with a picture of our team, to put some faces behind our service. We also had our Team Leaders for each Sessions group send out an email to their Sparklings with details specific to their Session by the Friday before the first week of Sessions to give them ample notice.
- Overall, we had 142 students register for Sessions this year!

Projects & Events: Spark Sessions (Ongoing)

- This week marked the first week of Spark Sessions! Our Sessions Coordinators (Sri, Ellen, and Shyreen) have been working so hard all summer to put together fall Sessions programming that is meaningful, exciting, and helpful to Sparklings.
- Sessions run from Mondays to Thursdays, from 1:30-2:30pm and 5:30-6:30pm each day. We have 2 Sessions groups running simultaneously at each timeslot, for a total of 16 groups.
- We have seen high attendance at Sessions during the first week. The first Session really sets the tone for the rest of the semester, and Team Leaders have told us that the Sparklings seem really engaged in Sessions, which the team is very excited about! Our focus is now on retention of Sparklings throughout the semester.

- We matched Sparklings into a Sessions group primarily based on their availability, but also tried our best to include them in a group where at least one of their Team Leaders is in the same program in them.
- Weekly Sessions training for Team Leaders has also begun! To accommodate everyone's availability, the Sessions Coordinators (Sri, Ellen, and Shyreen) run training at 2 times, Thursdays from 1:30-2:30pm and 6:00-7:00pm.

Projects & Events: First Year Formal (Upcoming)

- Our Events Coordinators (Ethan, Yaseen, and Ashley) have been putting a lot of effort into planning First Year Formal. Since this event is in collaboration with First Year Council, we have been meeting with the FYC Coordinator, Aryana, who has been absolutely lovely to work with!
- Based on its current popularity and opinions of our Executive and Team Leader teams, we chose the theme as Barbie. The event will be called "Pretty n' Pink"!
- We are currently communicating with AVTEK, Catering Services, prospective DJs, and Campus Events to plan the logistics, food, and entertainment at the event. Wooder has also been extremely helpful in providing us with suggestions and pointing us in the direction of others who could be helpful in the planning process.
- We have submitted an intake form to the Underground for promotional materials that both Spark and FYC will use. We have asked for rave cards, Instagram posts, and posters to go up around campus and in residence buildings.

Outreach & Promotions

Summary

We were very focused on promoting our service during Welcome Week and the month of September. Throughout Welcome Week, we handed out our physical promotional items to first-year students and CAs for them to deliver to their students. We launched our Executive introduction posts, which have a really unique style, conceptualized by our Promotions and Publications Coordinators (Linda and Katie), and helped us increase activity on our account. Our Welcome Week giveaway contest and Night Before Classes posts gained a lot of traction. We gained ~150 new followers from our contest! While our first Spark Sessions post did not receive as much engagement as we had hoped, supplementing it with the Sparked at Mac campaign and Instagram reel helped boost awareness.

Promotional Materials

Physical promotional materials distributed during Welcome Week and at ClubsFest (rave cards, stickers, buttons):



Executive Introduction Posts:

**SESSIONS
COORDINATORS**

SRI VANAMA | SHYREEN LONGIA | ELLEN WANG



**OUTREACH &
ENGAGEMENT**

SIMRAN LAZRADO | NICK CAI



**EVENTS
COORDINATORS**

YASEEN KHAN | ASHLEY HAUER | ETHAN KARIVELIL



**PROMOTIONS & PUBLICATIONS
COORDINATORS**

KATIE LIN | LINDA WU





Welcome Week Instagram Giveaway Contest:



Likes: 249
 Shares: 4
 Saves: 6
 Accounts reached: 3117

Night Before Classes Post:



Likes: 328

Shares: 323

Saves: 82

Accounts reached: 4578

Sessions Registration Post:



Likes: 93

Shares: 68

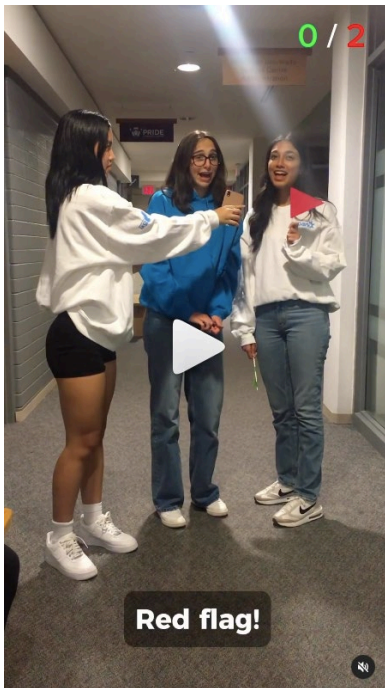
Saves: 31

Accounts reached: 2803

Sparked at Mac Campaign to promote Sessions Registration:



Instagram Reel to promote sessions registration:



Plays: 9978

Likes: 216

Shares: 32

Saves: 10

Social Media Engagement since the Previous Report

< **Insights** ⓘ

Custom ▾ **Aug 10 - Sep 26**

Overview

You gained **153** more followers compared to Jun 23 - Aug 9.

Accounts reached	10.8K > -30.3%
Accounts engaged	1,155 > +64%
Total followers	6,278 >

< **Professional dashboard** ⚙️

Insights **Aug 29 - Sep 27**

Accounts reached	8,877 > -8.5%
Accounts engaged	850 > +16.2%
Total followers	6,278 > +0.8%
Content you shared	51 >

Finances

Budget Summary

This month, we used our promotions spending line to order 500 more rave cards to be used throughout Sessions registration (\$150). We also spent money on our Executive introduction posts (\$330). So far, I have only ordered materials for our first Session, so that I could estimate how many supplies we would need for future weeks. I will be placing orders for Sessions materials for the rest of the semester in the coming week.

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	253.33
	REMAINING IN LINE	3445.67
6494-0125	VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION	400
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	100
	REMAINING IN LINE	300
6501-0125	ADV & PROMOTION	3600
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	1780.25
	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		2133.58
REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		6116.42

Executives & Volunteers

- Morale amongst Executives and Team Leaders seems to be high! It has been really nice to see everyone meeting each other in-person, and I think this has definitely helped build a sense of camaraderie amongst the team. We have shifted from virtual to in-person weekly Executive meetings, which has also improved team dynamics overall! Our Assistant Director, Avery, and I treated the team to pizza for our first in-person meeting!

- This past month has been very busy for Spark, so we will be holding D/AD and co-ship check-ins next week to see how we can best support the team in their individual projects/tasks.
- The start of weekly Sessions training and Sessions gives the Team Leaders the opportunity to get to know each other as well. As we move through the semester, I hope they find joy in coming together each week for Spark!
- We are hosting a Team Leader social next week, on October 5th, with board games, friendship bracelet making, and snacks!
- We will also be organizing team photos in the upcoming weeks.

Successes

- **Night Before Classes:** This event turned out extremely well, and I am so proud of our Outreach and Engagement Coordinators (Nick and Simran) for planning it all so thoroughly. The Executives and Team Leaders helping out during the event were excellent with taking initiative to lead tours and engage with first-year students, especially on an extremely hot day. Overall, the event was a big success and ran so smoothly!
- **Sessions Registration:** Our team really showed up for the service to promote registration this past month, and their efforts have been extremely commendable. Everyone on the team worked really hard to spread the word about Sessions and brought unique ideas to the table about how to increase registration. We truly could not have reached out to as many first-years or had such a strong presence throughout Welcome Week if not for all of their support and initiative.

Current Challenges

- **Room Bookings:** A main challenge for us this month has been finding rooms to book for all 16 Sessions and Sessions training. Since our Sessions take place in MUSC, Adam and Lori were very helpful in booking us all the rooms we needed for the semester. However, we have been struggling to book rooms for our weekly Sessions Training. While we have a room for both timeslots for the rest of the semester, we were unable to find a room for the afternoon training time for the first 2 weeks of Sessions training through Housing and Conference Services and had to adapt last-minute.
- **Scheduling Team Leaders and Executives:** Since Spark Executives and Team Leaders come from so many different programs and have many other commitments, it has been difficult to find times for Sessions Training and organize everyone into Sessions groups. Regardless, everyone has been very accommodating with their schedules, and Avery and I are extremely grateful for that. Currently, we have created a Sessions training quiz for individuals who are unable to come out to Sessions training. However, we would appreciate any other suggestions for how we can still

ensure that these Team Leaders feel included in training, despite it being asynchronous.

- Anticipated challenge-Sparkling Retention: Our service often struggles with retention of Sparklings throughout the semester, especially throughout busy times such as midterm and exam season. We are currently brainstorming ways to keep retention high!