



REPORT

From the office of the...

Spark Director

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Serena Bansal
SUBJECT: Spark Report 6
DATE: December 5, 2024

Yearplan Update

I'm happy to report that the past month has been a very successful one for Spark! November is typically one of the busiest times for our service, and it's been amazing to see the team come together to pull off so many great initiatives.

Some highlights include:

- Completing all eight weeks of Fall Mentorship Sessions.
- Reviving our collaboration with MacCrafters for a new pumpkin painting event: Spook or Spark.
- Successfully planning and executing First Year Formal 2024, which saw the highest attendance since the pandemic!
- Reaching our highest engagement levels on social media since the beginning of the year.

As the semester comes to an end, we're looking ahead to how we can continue to reach new heights as a team!

Events, Projects, & Activities

General Service Usage

We started the semester with ~130 first years registered in the Fall Mentorship program. With midterms and exam season coming up, we see around 3-4 first years at each session time. Our events have seen extremely high engagement, with ~60 attendees at Spook or Spark and 200+ tickets purchased for First Year Formal.

Projects & Events: Spook or Spark (Complete)

Spark's Events Coordinators (Megan, Nathan, & Sarvin) put together our first ever pumpkin painting event, in collaboration with two MSU clubs, MacCrafters and Mac Arts for Children. We've worked with MacCrafters in previous years to run events for first years, so it was exciting to bring this collaboration back with the new addition of Mac Arts for Children. The event took place on October 30th in the Grind, from 7:00-9:00pm. We bought pumpkins for around 40 attendees and exceeded our expected turnout with a total of 60 attendees! The event was a big success overall and created a great environment for first years to meet new friends and interact with upper years.



Photos from Spook or Spark

Projects & Events: Fall Mentorship Sessions (Complete)

Over the course of the semester, Spark's Sessions Coordinators (Kerry, Katie & Tanya) have been working hard to put together our 8 Fall sessions and train our Team Leaders each week. This semester, our sessions themes included:

1. The Spark that Starts it All: Introduction to Spark, team building activities with Sparklings, reflecting on what Sparklings are hoping to get out of Spark and their first semester of university.
2. Campus in your Hippocampus: Scavenger hunt to visit MSU and McMaster services and resources, based on the following guide <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12utaHkMI2M2sWq9cVdMhpy7UMH7iJYBR/view?usp=sharing>
3. Work Smarter, not Harder: Covering effective study strategies as Sparklings tackle their first set of midterms.
4. Turning Nothing into Something: Focused on introducing Sparklings who are not familiar with the Hamilton area to places to visit/activities off campus, as well as methods of transportation (HSR, SoBi).
5. Hike or Hang: Taking Sparklings on a trip to Westdale or a Cootes Paradise hike.
6. Rest and Recharge: Helping Sparklings understand the importance of self-care.

7. Love it or List it: Focused on where to start with looking for off-campus housing or other living options post-first year (Community Advisor roles)
8. Spice n' Ice: Reflection on Sparklings' first semester of university with activities like gingerbread cookie decorating.

This semester, we focused our sessions programming on helping students ease into university life. Our Sessions Coordinators did an amazing job planning sessions this semester, especially in a role that requires so much effort and creativity!



Photo from Week 8 of Spark Sessions

Projects & Events: First Year Formal 2024 (Complete!!!)

Every year, we try to make First Year Formal bigger and better than the last, and I can confidently say our Events Coordinators (Megan, Nathan, & Sarvin) succeeded! We sold 214 tickets for First Year Formal 2024: Winter Wonderland, for a total revenue of \$6025. The Events Coordinators have been planning First Year Formal since the summer, from booking the Hub, arranging catering, selecting decor, finding a DJ, and thinking of unique ways to make the event stand out. A big highlight was the addition of a rolled ice cream stand, which our Events Coordinators took the initiative to organize this year! Of course, First Year Formal would not be possible without the help of so many along with our Events Coordinators, so a big thank you goes out to:

- Mitch and the Hub staff for arranging our venue set up.
- AVTEK for setting up and coordinating all of our lighting and sound, and the DJ stage.
- The TwelvEighty staff for providing appetizers, drinks, and dessert.
- Adam, Declan, and Shemar for helping us reach out to sponsors.
- Pinks Burgers, Allure Fitness, The Westdale Theatre, and the President's Office for sponsoring the event monetarily or with prizes.
- Lift Church for providing cotton candy and water.
- DJ Facez (Alexander Gal) for absolutely killing it with the music!

- Diced Ice for the rolled ice cream stand, and making over 200 cups of ice cream in under 2 hours!
- The First Year Council promotions team for making some amazing reels to promote the event.
- Spark's Promotions Coordinators (Emma & Yazdaan) for their work on event graphics and reels.
- Ethan and Emma for taking photos at the event.
- And of course, our wonderful Team Leaders and Executive team who helped set up all the decor, blew up 200+ balloons, made sure the event ran smoothly throughout, and cleaned up at the end.

After the post-COVID dip in engagement with First Year Formal, I think we've set this event up to be something first years will look forward to in the years to come. I'm so proud of our team for all the time, energy, and excitement they brought to First Year Formal this year!

Spark Team at First Year Formal:

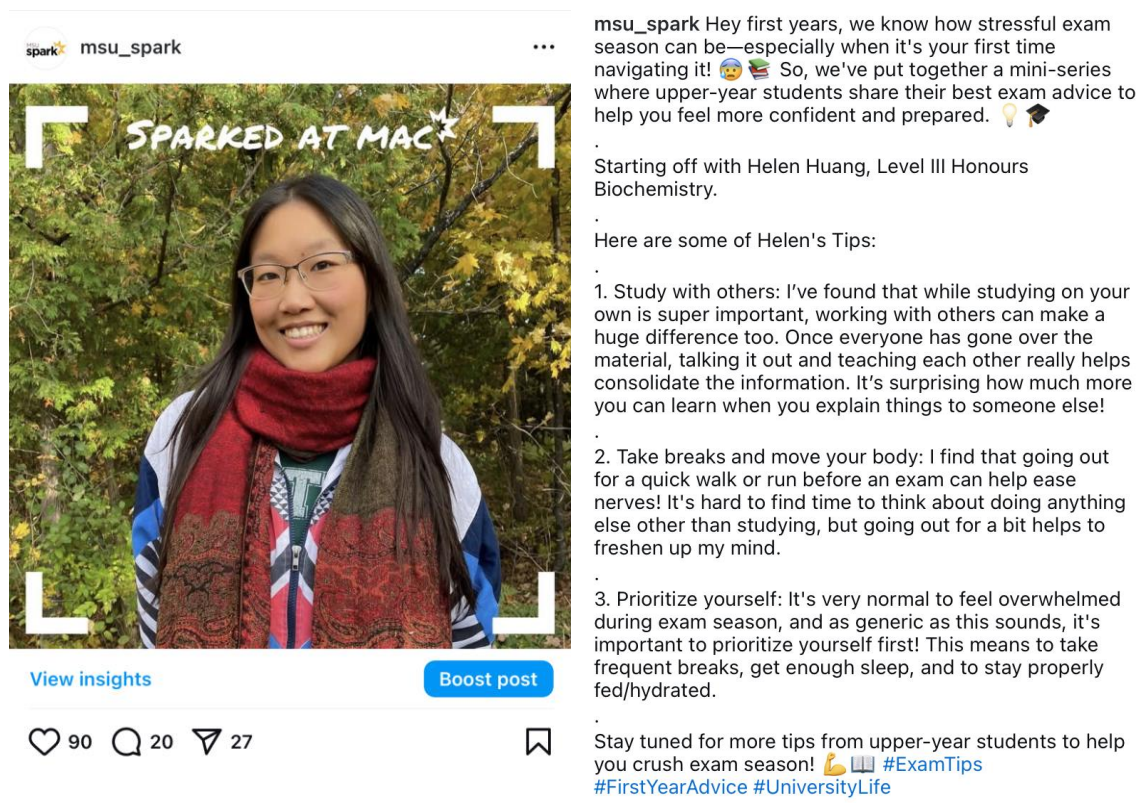


Projects & Events: MSU Exam Care Day (Complete)

Spark was involved in several aspects of the Exam Care Day collaboration between MSU services. We ran a Pomodoro timer study session with pastries from the Grind, and collaborated with other services to run the distress area (painting, colouring, and bracelet making) and coordinate therapy dogs. The Spark table also received significant engagement, and we were able to talk to a lot of first years about our service. Our Assistant Director, Sanjanaa, took on the responsibility of coordinating Spark's involvement in Exam Care Day, so a big thank you goes out to her!

Projects & Events: Social Media Exam Advice Series (Ongoing)

One of the major goals Sanjanaa and I had for Spark this year was to feature more of the faces behind our service on our Instagram to foster better connections with the first year student population. Every semester, Spark releases a publication on social media with information that would be helpful for first year students to know. This semester, our Promotions and Publications Coordinators decided to feature Team Leaders providing advice for students going into their first exam season, instead of the typical graphics we go with. This series will continue for the rest of the week and has already received amazing engagement. Here's an example below:



The screenshot shows an Instagram post from the account 'msu_spark'. The post features a photo of a young woman with glasses and a red scarf, smiling, with the text 'SPARKED AT MAC' overlaid on the image. Below the photo are engagement icons for likes (90), comments (20), and shares (27), along with a 'Boost post' button. The caption text reads: 'msu_spark Hey first years, we know how stressful exam season can be—especially when it's your first time navigating it! 🤔📚 So, we've put together a mini-series where upper-year students share their best exam advice to help you feel more confident and prepared. 💡🎓 Starting off with Helen Huang, Level III Honours Biochemistry. Here are some of Helen's Tips: 1. Study with others: I've found that while studying on your own is super important, working with others can make a huge difference too. Once everyone has gone over the material, talking it out and teaching each other really helps consolidate the information. It's surprising how much more you can learn when you explain things to someone else! 2. Take breaks and move your body: I find that going out for a quick walk or run before an exam can help ease nerves! It's hard to find time to think about doing anything else other than studying, but going out for a bit helps to freshen up my mind. 3. Prioritize yourself: It's very normal to feel overwhelmed during exam season, and as generic as this sounds, it's important to prioritize yourself first! This means to take frequent breaks, get enough sleep, and to stay properly fed/hydrated. Stay tuned for more tips from upper-year students to help you crush exam season! 📖📚 #ExamTips #FirstYearAdvice #UniversityLife'

Projects & Events: Winter Mentorship Sessions (Upcoming)

Since completing Fall sessions, our team has been thinking about how we can continue to ensure our sessions are valuable to first years in the Winter, and increase engagement within sessions. Some things we plan to do differently next semester include:

- Releasing our Winter mentorship program registration graphic and form before the end of the Fall semester instead of the beginning of the Winter to allow for more time to gather registrants.
- Creating an incentive ladder for students who consistently attend sessions and show commitment to the program (e.g. small tokens/prizes after attending 3 sessions, 5 sessions, etc.).
- Promoting all 8 Winter sessions themes on social media before registration closes so first years have a better idea of how we can serve them.
- Sending an email out to every first-year student at McMaster to inform them about Winter sessions.
- Introducing a drop-in format to sessions. Spark has always been registration based, meaning sessions are only offered to the students who register for them at the beginning of the semester. Next semester, we are planning to promote each week of sessions on Instagram before the start of the week and keep them open to any first-year student who would find them helpful.

Our Sessions Coordinators are currently working on planning Winter sessions. Our 8 finalized themes for the winter are:

1. Goal setting/setting attainable new year's resolutions
2. Degree mapping/program planning/exploring specializations
3. Resumes/cover letters/interviews/searching for jobs
4. Getting involved on campus/leadership opportunities in the community
5. Financial literacy
6. Tackling imposter syndrome
7. Developing basic cooking skills
8. Exploring the city/Westdale area

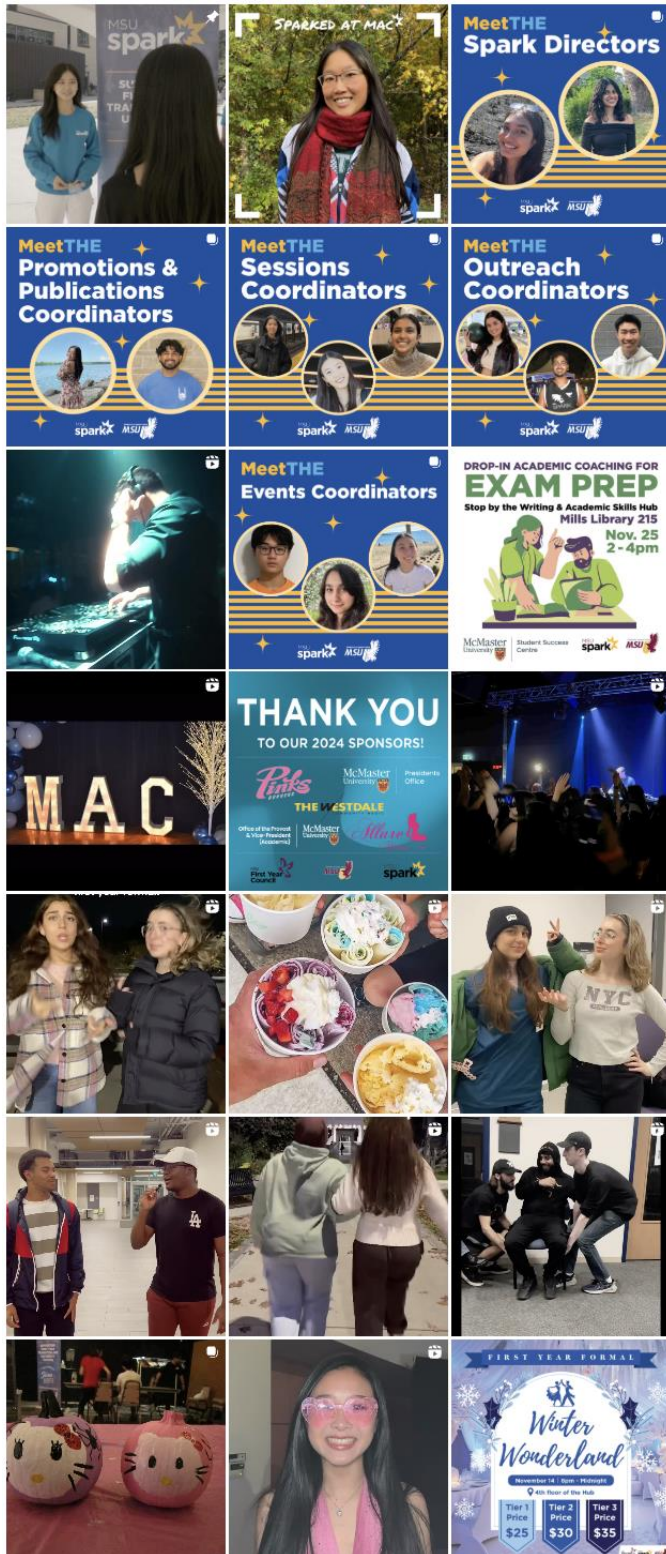
Outreach & Promotions

Summary

This month has seen a packed social media feed from Spark. Between First Year Formal promotions (shoutout to First Year Council for some of the First Year Formal reels!) event recaps, and Executive team introductions, our social media engagement has been at an all-time high in November!

Promotional Materials

Instagram feed since my last report:



Executive introduction posts:

Meet THE Outreach Coordinators



MSU spark McMaster Students Union **MSU**

Meet Raymond Qu




Year: 3
Program: Health Sciences
Favourite Study spot: Mills 4th floor or Thode Basement
Go to tims order: Double Double
Go to music playlist: Drake
Favorite Course: MUSIC 2MT3

MSU spark McMaster Students Union **MSU**

Social Media Engagement since the Previous Report

Engagement of our top performing posts:

< **Post insights**



October 28 at 12:37 PM

509 16 1.4K 75


Overview ⓘ

Views	40,546
Interactions	1,981
Profile activity	313


Views ⓘ

40,546
Views

32.3% Followers ● 67.7% Non-followers ●



< **Reel insights**



Hope everyone had a great time at first year formal!!!
November 15 · Duration 0:22

183 10 56 4

Overview ⓘ

Views	10,818
Watch time	13h 25m 12s
Interactions	253
Profile activity	0

Overall engagement since my last report:

157,592

Views



4,391

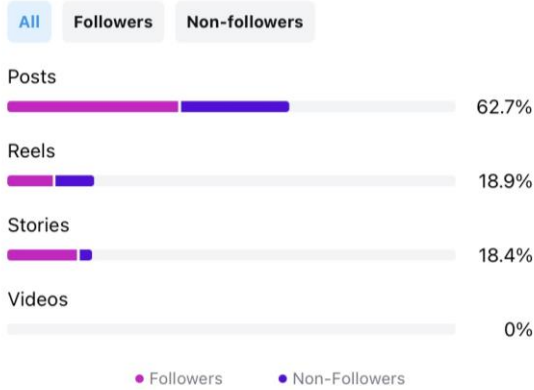
Interactions



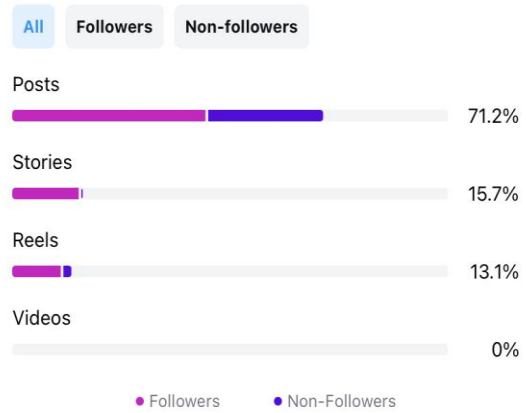
Accounts reached 20,461 +113%

Accounts engaged 1,404

By content type



By content type



Finances

Budget Summary

Most of our spending this month has been on materials for weekly sessions, and for volunteer appreciation initiatives like our volunteer social and intramural team.

ACCOUNT CODE	ITEM	BUDGET / COST
5003-0125		50
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	0
	REMAINING IN LINE	50
6103-0125		3500
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	603.21
	REMAINING IN LINE	2896.79
6494-0125		550
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	296.88

	REMAINING IN LINE	253.12
6501-0125		
		3800
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	2359.95
	REMAINING IN LINE	1440.05
6802-0125		
		650
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	0
	REMAINING IN LINE	650
TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		8550
TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		3260.04
REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		5289.96

Executives & Volunteers

- As we near the end of a semester, it's amazing to see the friendships and sense of camaraderie that's been built between our Executives and Team Leaders. Morale seems to be good with many Team Leaders and Executives coming out to events. First Year Formal also tends to be a pretty high point for boosting morale!
- Sanjanaa and I have been holding 1on1 check ins with our team and their feedback about their experience on Spark has been overall positive. One point of feedback brought up was that Team Leaders wanted more opportunities to connect with other TLs who they don't often see through Spark's regular programming. To address this, we'll be having a volunteer social this week, which everyone seems excited to attend!
- We've signed up for a Spark intramural dodgeball team next semester, which should be fun.

Successes

- Our biggest success this month was First Year Formal! The event is a huge endeavour for our service and takes months to plan, so it was amazing to see the team's hard work pay off. It can be hard to predict how much engagement ticketed events without a well-established reputation will receive. We exceeded our target ticket sales goal, a testament to how amazing of an event our Events Coordinators put together.
- Preparing for Winter sessions: the team has been working hard to brainstorm ways to boost engagement next semester with some great ideas that we will hopefully contribute to higher Sparkling attendance.

Current Challenges

- Lower engagement of first years within sessions has been somewhat discouraging for the Team Leaders. We hope to improve Sparkling attendance with the initiatives outlined earlier.

Miscellaneous

N/A. Thank you for reading this report!