



REPORT

From the office of the...

MSU Spark Coordinator

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Mike Gill
SUBJECT: MSU Spark Report 6
DATE: March 2nd, 2016

UPDATE

It's been a while! A whole lot has happened since we last spoke. In summary, we've had slightly higher turnout this term, First Year Feedback Forum was great, our first few sessions have been great, our Applicant Workshop was amazing. Wid Yaseen is going to be a stellar Coordinator.

SERVICE USAGE

We're averaging just above 5 students per session this year. This works out to roughly 100 students present each week.

We had almost 100 students present at First Year Feedback Forum, which is great.

We had 87 students attend Applicant Workshop, which is mind boggling.

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

Opening Ceremonies

Opening Ceremonies this year was held on a Friday afternoon, as we'd had limited success on Sunday nights. However, despite this change we still saw a rather lackluster turn out of around 70 students. In future, we are going to be removing Opening Ceremonies – which is impossible to schedule without a large number of student and TL conflicts. We feel the low attendance at this initial event likely hurts turn out at later sessions, as students see few others in their session group are present.

First Year Feedback Forum

First year feedback forum was a large success this year. Despite the promotional challenges presented by MSU Presidentials, we were still able to bring out almost 100 participants. The event took place over the course of four hours, and involved the following key campus partners:

- Kris Knorr from MIETL, discussing mentorship on campus
- Jennifer Kleven from the Off-Campus Resource Center, discussing living off-campus and transitioning off campus from residence
- Melissa Fernandes from the SWELL, discussing mental health stigma and support on campus
- Michele Corbeil and Chukky Ibe from the Student Success Center, discussing Welcome Week
- Allen Fein from Arrive and Thrive, discussing Arrive and Thrive
- Multiple First Year Council Members, discussing the MSU's connection to first year students

- Chris Roberts Director of Hospitality Services, discussing food on campus
- Leanne Ruiz from Student Financial Aid, discussing OSAP and SFA awareness
- Marina Sadik, intro psych TA and MSSS VP Academic, discussing blended learning

The University Affairs Committee is currently reviewing the responses and notes and will be crafting a report to outline key findings from the event.

First Sessions

Kevan and Lindsay have invested a lot of time in to creating engaging, relevant sessions. This, combined with the fact that we've rearranged the order of our sessions to highlight the most engaging sessions early in the term, has lead to very positive responses from Team Leaders. We've made an effort to emphasize when feedback has been incorporated in to changes, as it's important to validate the time they take to communicate concerns.

Applicant Workshop

This was an outstanding success. As mentioned earlier, 87 students attended and we have over 130 registered. This event was a collaborative effort between Horizons, CLAY, and ourselves. 33 individuals completed feedback for the event – which is a huge number. The average likert response for how engaging each station was, as well as how valuable each station was, exceed 4 in all cases – which is incredibly high. Constructive criticism was also provided, some of which included having the event run for longer. In general, this event was a booming success and a great positive step forward for our community. Huge shoutout to Jonathan Davis and Jack Legere hitting their final workshop out of the park.

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

Remaining Sessions

We have one completely brand new session coming up, which I'm incredibly excited to see. It focuses on positive psychology and mindfulness, and will be quite unique from anything I've seen in Spark/Clay/Horizons before. Shoutout to Lindsay and Kevan for pushing forward with this idea. Also, Diversity Services have agreed to host an hour long, personalized training for our Team Leaders, for which we are grateful. WGEN provided us with a great description of their service that we are able to share with our students during our Wellness session this week; however, I was disappointed to see that none of PSL, the QSCC, or SHEC responded to our request for something similar – despite having more than two weeks of notice.

Volunteer Recognition & Team Building

We're planning a few team building dinners and events to try and recognize all the hard work our team leaders have invested thus far. The job really does demand a lot, so we want to make sure they walk away feeling recognized and appreciated.

Closing Ceremonies and Exam Destressors

We are planning to hold Closing Ceremonies at Bridges again this term. Last term we saw a massive turn out, and providing students an opportunity to step outside of their comfort zone and perform proved to be very powerful. Beyond this, we are hoping to hold a camp-fire destressor event either before or during exam period for both Fall and Winter cohorts of Spark students.

Spark Ambassador Social

We haven't been as actively engaging Spark Ambassadors this term; however, we hope to have the group plan a somewhat large social for the participants in the service this term. We fill this is a fun way to recognize and empower our more engaged students, while also taking the burden for planning another event off of the executives.

Transition

This is sad, but necessary. We're going to put a whole lot of time in to authoring transition reports/documents, and arranging transition meetings. The plan is for Exec to be hired prior to the end of the year / by mid March. However, we've decided not to hire Team Leaders until August. There is a pretty solid rationale for this: the longer someone is in the position of Team Leader, the more we can expect their initial excitement with the role to fade. Given that September is a very demanding time for Team Leaders, we want to hire people almost immediately before this, to try and ensure the highest possible buy in during training. Further, given that we consider prior conference experience heavily in our hiring protocol, it only makes sense that we are hiring Team Leaders after the Horizons hiring process occurs, so that we can accurately reflect someones experience by the time September roles around.

BUDGET

Category	Ytd	Pr. YTD	Approved Budget
Special Projects	\$340.98	\$533.01	\$4,000
Advertising Promo.	\$2,289.59	\$1,248.67	\$2,400
Leader Training	\$395.63	\$175.74	\$500
Wages	\$5,575.31	5,348.15	\$6600

Note: some expenses from early term 2 have been delayed due to my leave of absence. Also, a number of invoices from the Underground were only received by accounting a month and a half following the orders being placed. All of these costs are not yet reflected in the budget.

VOLUNTEERS

One great thing about this time of year is that now all of our Team Leaders appear to be very comfortable, which is great. We've run activities during our trainings, and the quality of conversation/facilitation is very high. However, many individuals start to look ahead to new positions at this time of year. Given this, and some other realities, investment from the team varies quite a bit from person to person – roughly 1 third of the team is still very highly engaged, 1 third is moderately engaged, and on third is less engaged than ideal.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Some teamleaders have been failing to follow through on different commitments, such as weekly training, and have done so without notifying Wid or their Co's. This is fairly is fairly disappointing, especially as some of this individuals are volunteers or exec for other services, and I doubt they would engage the same way in these other roles. Part of the problem may lie in the fact that – to accommodate for the super bowl – we cancelled training. While the intention here was to be kind to Team Leaders, it might have also unintentionally communicated that training was not absolutely mandatory.

Learning to Fly hasn't been launched with the same vigor as we had hoped. For quite a few months, myself and the Publications Executive have been under the impression that our stories, as well as our submission form, would be featured through MacTalks week. However, sometime shortly after my

return to the role after my leave of absence, I was informed this would not be the case, and that there was no opportunity for discussion. While this jarring change was likely due to some miscommunication along the way, it was still quite disappointing for myself, and demoralizing for my Executive who had invested time and energy in to preparing for the campaign.

SUCSESSES

The Events portfolio has been incredibly successful this year. It definitely represented a very effective expansion of the service. I'm excited to see it continue to grow in future years.

First Year Feedback Forum was stellar, despite my absence for the two weeks immediately prior. Wid did an amazing job.

Our publications are great, and Helen has done a great job of proving the concept behind publications, and laying a very solid groundworl for future years. So long as our future promotions and publications executive has design experience, I'm sure this role will continue to produce a ton of valuable content.

Our sessions our fire.

Our team leaders are amazing humans – I'm sure in any given week if we didn't provide them any session instructions/materials, they'be be able to keep students engaged regardless.

Things are running smoothly, and we're prioritizing the experience of not only students but Team Leaders. It makes me happy to think that, despite the relatively disconnected nature of Spark, many members of our team have made close friends this year.