



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## Spark Coordinator

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TO: Members of the Executive Board  
FROM: Wid Yaseen  
SUBJECT: Spark Report #3  
DATE: Friday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016

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### **UPDATE**

October was an important month for my team – we’ve gotten into a rhythm with weekly sessions and trainings, and have gained more confidence in our specific portfolios.

### **SERVICE USAGE**

Our first ever first year student formal, Fire and Ice, sold out in one week (amazing).

Students continue to attend their weekly sessions. We’re seeing an average of 5 students per group.

### **PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

#### **Mentorship Program**

We are now on session 8 out of 10 for our mentorship program. Each week, Maha Moin and Selina Mitchell have been committed to polishing up the sessions they created in the summer, organizing training, and supporting TLs with session preparation. We have on average 5 first-year students attending their session every week, with variation depending on peak times during the term (ex. Midterms). We’ve had many successes within the program.

#### Session #4: Discover Your City

This session has been a true staple for Spark. The goal is to get students off campus with their groups, helping them become familiar with navigating the HSR and Hamilton. Students were given instructions and asked to find their way to a Locke Street coffee shop with their groups. Students really valued getting time to informally bond with their group. We provided \$20 for each co-pairing to purchase snacks/beverages for their group at the coffee shop.

#### Session #5: Support and Resilience

This session focused on topics regarding mental wellbeing, and conversations about resources on campus that can support students in maintaining personal wellness. TLs reported that this session did an awesome job of getting students to open up about their experiences and helped add depth to the relationships between and with students.

#### Session #6: Social Awareness

This session was focused on facilitating students’ understanding of each other’s diverse experiences and identities. This sparked incredible conversations amongst students regarding current events, diversity and representation at McMaster, and in our broader community.

### Session #7: Getting Involved

This session helped students learn about involvement opportunities, on and off campus, paid and volunteer, that they can be part of. Students were given time to find their passions, and had the opportunity to practice their interview skills in a mock group interview.

### Session # 8: Life After First Year (Mac Bread Bin Collaboration)

This year, we've introduced a new session called 'Life After First Year' that helps transition students into thinking about second year. Given students will soon start thinking about housing and off-campus living, we've included these themes in the session. The session discusses housing and meal preparation – areas that most students are anxious about! We've collaborated with Mac Bread Bin to put this together – Taylor Mertens and Zoe Davidson have been a pleasure to work with. Groups will be preparing rice wraps and overnight oats, and each student will take home a mason jar filled with recipes and grocery shopping locations. We hope that starting these conversations early will help students feel more confident in making choices for future years!

Maha Moin and Selina Mitchell deserve a huge shout out for all their hard work on sessions.

### **Weekly Training**

Our weekly training sessions (Thursdays and Sundays) have been well underway. The Sunday training session feels slightly less rushed than the Thursday training, possibly as a result of class schedules/commitments. We've re-invented trainings by providing TLs more opportunities to engage with the activities, running sessions with the team, and allowing exec to contribute to leading training. TL's provided positive feedback on training thus far, and I'm proud of the improvement we've had compared to previous years.

### **TL Social**

Adam Merlo Merlo planned an awesome team social for our TL's! About 15-20 TL's came to our social where we spent a night at the Phoenix Trivia Night with lots of food and good vibes. I think the team really enjoyed having an informal setting to bond, outside of any real programming. I'm excited to do more – clearly TL's are eager to get to know each other.

### **Midterm TL Feedback**

I've collected feedback from TL's – we received a lot of positive feedback, but we were also able to identify areas of improvement. My exec team and I are working to address the feedback and ensure our volunteers are having a positive and enriching experience.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

### **Sessions 9 and 10**

We're looking forward to the last two sessions titled Goal Setting and Change. The last week of the sessions program will be the final week of November, with the first week of December being our closing ceremonies coffee house.

### **Closing Ceremonies**

We only have 3 weeks left of sessions! On the last Monday of classes (Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>), we are hosting a closing ceremonies coffee house for students in Spark. This is something we did last year that worked really well, and I'm excited to see it again this year. It'll be open-mic, where students can perform with their groups or each other, we'll have board games, and some hot chocolate! It'll be a great wrap up to our sessions program, and hopefully end the term off on a high note.

### **First Year Formal**

Our first even first year student formal (Fire & Ice) is on November 24<sup>th</sup> at the Scottish Rite. We sold out in one week – an incredible accomplishment. We are currently looking into selling more tickets if approved by the venue. I definitely believe that this event has the potential to grow into something bigger in future years. The collaboration with FYC has been important to its success, in addition to the support we've received from RezLife. We promoted the formal in every residence through posters and TV screens. Currently on Facebook, there are over a dozen posts from students looking to buy tickets. There is a clear interest in social programming for first year students, and I believe that Spark should provide more to foster a community amongst first years through these avenues. Huge shout out to David Zilkey and Kristina Jagger, my Events Coordinators, Kristen Webster, the FYC Coordinator, as well as the entire FYC team for all their hard work. A massive shout out to Kayla Da Silva for her beautiful promotional work and energy in promoting the event.

### **RezLife Collaboration**

We've been invited to facilitate a session in Brandon Hall this week! We'll be leading one of the sessions from our program (Getting Involved session) with students in Brandon Hall as a residence event. This is going to be an awesome opportunity for TLs to engage with first year students outside of Spark and connect with students who might be registering for Spark in Term 2!

### **TL Holiday Social**

We are currently planning a holiday social for our team! It will take place the same night as Eggnog, a few hours prior. This will allow our team to bond and then head over to Eggnog together – as I know it can be very intimidating for less-involved students to engage socially with the MSU. We'll be showing a movie, potentially playing some holiday fun games, and definitely putting together a thank you gift of sorts as a small thank you to all the wonderful work our volunteers do.

### **Spark Ambassadors**

Last year, we started an internal committee of Spark student ambassadors. What worked really well last year was engaging first year students to represent Spark and help us promote the program and events. This year, we will be continuing with Spark Ambassadors, but their focus will be specific to promotions. We're starting a bit later than I had originally planned; however, Kayla Da Silva and Adam Merlo Merlo will be getting the program on its feet in the next week. We've created a timeline – we'll be recruiting students this week, and having our first meeting next week. This will allow 2 weeks for students to get excited about contributing to term 2 promo whether through online photos/video or in-person tabling/student visits during exams. Having first year students contribute to promoting registration will be valuable, especially because they have had the opportunity to experience the program themselves.

### **Term 2 Sessions Program Registration**

We will be opening up registration for the Term 2 sessions program in mid-December during exams. We'll be promoting registration until about 2 weeks after classes resume in January. I'm currently working with Kayla Da Silva, our Publications & Promotions Coordinator, to solidify our promotional timeline and be prepared before we head into exams.

**BUDGET**

**McMaster Student's Union**  
**Dept. 0125 - SPARK**  
**For the Four Months Ending August 31, 2016**

	Current	Prior Yr.	Current	Prior Yr.	Prior Yr.	Approved	% Budget
	Month	Month	YTD	YTD	YE	Budget	Used
	August	August	2016-17	2015-16	2015-16	2017	To Date
All:							
5003-0125 SPARK - OFFICE SUPPLIES						60.00	0.00%
5101-0125 SPARK - TELEPHONE					225.76	60.00	0.00%
6103-0125 SPARK - SPECIAL PROJECTS					2,430.91	3,000.00	0.00%
6501-0125 SPARK - ADV. & PROMOTION		1,740.39	863.90	1,740.39	2,693.67	2,400.00	36.00%
6802-0125 SPARK - LEADER TRAINING		138.43		138.43	395.63	720.00	0.00%
7001-0125 SPARK - WAGES		670.04	780.02	2,556.61	7,786.32	6,600.00	11.82%
7101-0125 SPARK - BENEFITS		55.27	50.71	208.20	603.19	540.00	9.39%
						13,380.0	
Total All		2,604.13	1,694.63	4,643.63	14,135.48	0	12.67%

**VOLUNTEERS**

Adam Merlo has been doing a great job of checking in with volunteers through one-on-one meetings. Because Spark is so ongoing, conflicts are often inevitable between co-relationships; however, Adam is doing a great job of supporting TL's with challenges. I am excited to switch up co-pairings in second term to keep TL's engaged and getting to know other members on our team.

**CURRENT CHALLENGES**

Solidifying room bookings for term 2 is our next big challenge – we require lots of room bookings to run our mentorship program and these often take some time to finalize. I am hoping to continue using MUSC provided that they can accommodate our needs.

**SUCSESSES**

We've taken great strides as a team this year – I'm really proud of my executives for all their hard work, and of the TLs for their commitment to their students.