UPDATE
WOW!! It has been quite a busy summer for the Spark Executive Team but nevertheless absolutely rewarding. On April 27th, before everyone left for the summer, I held an Executive Retreat from 10am-5pm in MUSC 303. The whole team engaged in team expectations, an overview of each role, and some team bonding activities. This helped set us up for a successful summer term. Part of this retreat involved each of the Exec making their own year plans. It has been so exciting to see all their ideas and hard work come to life over the past 3 months!

SERVICE USAGE
Student registration will be opening during Welcome Week and will be heavily promoted for the following two weeks after that. Students will be put into groups prior to July 18th, as Monday September 18th to Thursday September 21st will be our first week of sessions, which we are super excited for! We are aiming to have 10-12 students in each group in first term (with a total of 20 groups) therefore supporting approximately 200-240 students in our sessions program alone. Having this cap of 10-12 students will ensure that there is still enough hype for students to register in second term as we hope to not have a cap on the number of students in second term.

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES
May at Mac
May at Mac was a lot of fun as myself and Lisa (Events Coordinator) were tabling in MUSC atrium. We met with many potential incoming first year students and handed out informational rave cards designed by Haley, our Promotions and Publications Coordinator, to take home if they wished. Overall it was a successful day and it was really great to see Lisa get so excited to talk to potential students. It definitely helped bring their roles and hard work to life!

Transition Meetings
Throughout May and the beginning of June I had transition meetings with Wid, the 2016/17 Spark Coordinator and various campus partners. We met with Sean Beaudette from Residence Life, and Jeremy Sandor and Tanya Kett from the the Student Success Centre (SSC) to ensure we could maintain strong relationships and build upon past partnerships with these offices at the university.

I set up a transitional meeting with Michael Woorder and Sarah Conrad to establish how Spark Promotions and Publications will take place this year and we reviewed expectations and working relationships. Later, I set up a meeting with Haley, our Promotions and Publications Coordinator, and Sarah Conrad so that we could have a strong start with upcoming promotional material for Team Leaders.

Spark Formal/Events
Events Coordinators Sarah and Lisa have been busy looking into Venues for this year’s Spark Formal. During June/July we visited Liuna Station, Sheraton Hotel, and Hamilton Convention Centre and have been in contact with the Scottish Rite, The Spice Factory, and Carmen’s by email. We have gathered different quotes based on the type of event we plan to host and in addition have met with Tuba to discuss budgeting and potential monetary donations from Residence Life, SSC, or different faculty societies. We plan to have the venue booked by the end of the month.

Additionally, logistics for our first Workshop Event in October is in full swing! We are still in the process of finalizing the event. We revamped the usual midterm prep workshop Spark usually holds because it has had low attendance for the past 2 years. We are hosting an escape room workshop with the same theme but we hope the change from lecture style to activity style will help engage with students more.

Sessions
All 10 sessions for the first term of the sessions program are complete! We are now in the editing/revising stage. Sessions Coordinators, Jane and Giancarlo, along with myself, are now revisiting each activity and theme to ensure it will best support first year students. We are now working on drafting a material list for each session and training documents to ensure we are well prepared to train Team Leaders and run sessions in September.
**Staff Socials**
While we anxiously await our team, our Volunteer Coordinator, Sehar, has brainstormed some really great staff social ideas! There are currently four socials planned for the year equally spaced out to ensure we can appreciate all the hard work of our Team Leaders, and the first one is set up for October. I truly believe our volunteers will feel best supported and appreciated from what Sehar has planned - I’m so excited!

**Team Leader Hiring**
We are currently in the middle of promoting our volunteer Team Leader positions for the upcoming school year. Applications close on the 23rd at 11:59pm so please let individuals know they still have 4 days to apply! Haley, our Promotions and Publications Coordinator, designed some beautiful promotional material and wrote a great script for our TL video. Huge thank you to Sarah Conrad for filming, our Executive Team had so much fun!

The Spark page on the MSU website was updated with new executive headshots and bios so that individuals clicking through our page could see our team and contact us for any questions.

Haley’s promotional material for our Team Leader positions have been positively received. In the past week we have reached 8,621 people, a 24% increase in the past week and our TL video was viewed 2300 times!

Once applications close on the 23rd, we will be marking applications and preparing for our interviews which will be taking place Friday August 11th-Sunday August 13th.

**Spark Space**
In the past, Spark has always had difficulty securing space for our session rooms because we require 5 rooms a night, Monday-Thursday in a central location. Last year, Spark moved to a model of booking MUSC rooms which worked very well. I’m happy to say we are continuing to work with MUSC and have all our session rooms booked for the whole year! We look forward to utilizing this space for sessions. I hope that this continues as it makes attending sessions easier for students, picking up materials easier for TL’s and overall makes the logistics of sessions run as smooth as possible.

**UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

**Interviews**
Interviews for Team Leader positions will take place August 11th-13th. Our exec team is currently in the stages of planning interview logistics, designing interview rooms, and compiling interview questions.

**Welcome Week**
I’m looking forward to trying to revamp Spark’s involvement with Welcome Week. I met with VP Admin, Preethi, and I hope to have a pop up tent set up in front of the Gwen George Memorial garden, the central garden on campus facing BSB. This will act as a “blue” zone or “chill” zone where students can go to hang out and talk to Team Leaders in case they need a break from programmed activities or want to meet other leaders on campus. This will help with early TL engagement for those who aren’t repping during welcome week and will help kick start student registration. In addition, I met with the Residence Orientation Planner, Taha, and have scheduled Spark to give informational talks during opening and closing ceremonies in residences. Furthermore, I am in email correspondence with SOCS Welcome Week planners Bruce Cole and Shaveta Kaushal to establish when Spark will be presenting at one of their events.

**Horizons**
Horizons is taking place July 28th-30th, and Spark will be attending their annual Success Fest event. I, along with some of my exec will attend this event to talk to incoming first years about the Spark program and how they can go about registering once they arrive in September. We are awaiting final logistics from the Horizons team closer to the event and we’re looking forward to engaging with students!!

In addition, we are hoping to have a new service banner designed in time for this event. Haley is currently working on designs and we’re excited to see them!

**BUDGET**

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VOLUNTEERS

We are still in the process of hiring our volunteer but the Executive Team is so incredibly excited! Once we select our team on August 13th we hope to engage our volunteers during welcome week, during our Staff Meet and Greet, Volunteer Training, and Session Feedback Nights all happening in late August and the month of September.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

**Spark First Year Formal**
While planning for this event is super exciting it is a little stressful working with our current budget. Last year, the formal was a huge success, however one improvement that can be made is moving from hor d’oeuvres to a sit down meal. This would require a larger budget and we are hoping campus partners will be generous in providing monetary support as this is the only formal exclusively for ALL first years across campus.

SUCCESSES

I cannot rave enough about my Executive Team. They are always on top of everything, 5 steps ahead, and their ideas have the best interests of students and volunteers. They work tirelessly to tackle any challenges, engage in our meetings, and keep organized using our executive documents/folders set up in our drive for a successful year. I’m so proud of what we have accomplished so far and I’m incredibly excited to make this team bigger! I look forward to meeting 34 more Team Leaders and meeting all the first year students.

OTHER

I’m always happy to hear any feedback or answer any questions! Feel free to send me an email at spark@msu.mcmaster.ca

Here are some important upcoming dates for Spark that I will be discussing in future reports:
- August 11th-13th: Team Leader Interviews/Hiring
- September 8th: Staff Meet and Greet
- September 11th-14th: TL Session Feedback nights
- September 18th-21st: First week of Sessions program
- August 28th-September 15th: First Year Student Registration