



REPORT

From the office of the...
Spark Coordinator

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Lindsay D'Souza
SUBJECT: Spark Report #4
DATE: Friday, November 3rd, 2017

UPDATE

This past week marked our official "halfway point" for sessions and overall service operations for first term! We have completed 6 sessions, 1 workshop, 1 TL Social, and are releasing our first online guidebook in the next couple of weeks! We can't believe it's already November and are happy to report how critical October was for establishing rhythm, routine, and relationships for our team.

SERVICE USAGE

We are currently selling tickets for our second annual First Year Formal: A Starry Night in collaboration with First Year Council. Last year the formal sold out 250 tickets in a week and we are hoping to reach an audience of 300 this year.

Students continue to attend weekly sessions Monday-Thursday from 6:30-8pm. On average we're seeing 6 students a week per group.

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

Mentorship Program

We are currently on session 7 out of 10 for the first term of our mentorship program. Jane and Giancarlo continue to work tirelessly to make each session relevant to first year experiences, fun, and inclusive for both Team Leaders and students. In addition to preparing materials for session bags, sending out reminders, and facilitating two session trainings a week (Thursday 5:30-6:30pm and Sundays 6-7pm) they continue to support TL's in growing their leadership skills and addressing any questions, concerns, or feedback in regards to sessions. We have on average 6 students attending session each week, with this number varying around busy times in the school year (including midterms). Here are a few highlights from our sessions these past few weeks since the last report:

Session #1-Intro to Spark

This session eases students into our mentorship program and focuses on group introductions and setting expectations. We facilitate large group icebreakers so students are able to meet others in the program and then break off into their smaller session groups. They have an oppor-

tunity to discuss any fears they have entering first year which normalizes these feelings of transition by showing that everyone in the group is experiencing similar feelings. After session #1 students travel to Alpine Tower for our staple bonfire event during the first week where they are able to throw all their fears into the fire as they will have the support of Spark for next 10 weeks.

Session #2-Team Work and Compromise

The goal of this session is to create a sense of community and interconnectedness between students and TL's. Student's will utilize problem-solving skills to overcome the different challenges in the activities and debrief how these same problem solving skills apply to every day challenges of first year. The activity "Settlers of Spark" (like Settlers of Catan) displays not only the importance of working as a team but what it means to empower others; how you can use compromise and balance to help others around you as well as yourself to succeed together and become aware of the resources available to you.

Session #3-Stress Management and Resources

This session provides students with an opportunity to explore healthy stress management techniques. Students learn about some of the resources on campus that are available to them and TL's emphasize the importance of self-care and maintaining wellness during the stressful school year.

Session #4-Discover Your City

This session is a Spark tradition! I still remember going to this session with my TL's when I was a Spark student and having tons of fun. This session encourages students to get off campus, navigate the HSR system, and discover a different area of Hamilton for the night. Student were sent to Locke Street with their groups and groups were divided between Brown Dog Cafe, Democracy Cafe, and Finch on Locke. We provided each group \$20 to buy food for their group. We received a lot of positive feedback for this session! Even if it was a busy time in midterms, students could still bring their work the the cafes, study with their spark friends, and have relaxing conversations. A lot of students were excited to get off campus for a chill night, and I hope this tradition continues for Spark in future years.

Session #5-Support and Resilience

This session provided students with the opportunity to discuss various scenarios surrounding consent and mental health. These are two reoccurring and large topics that are continuously experienced in a university setting. By introducing students to these topics as well as multiple resources we hope to bring them awareness to their personal different comfort levels as they continue to approach new situations and self caring practices throughout their next few years at school.

Session #6- Getting Involved

This session gives students a space to find opportunities to get involved in a community both on and off campus in forms of research, volunteering, clubs, services, etc. TL's help students feel more prepared for application procedures by conducting mock interviews and going over effective tips for written applications and resumes. Students provided lots of positive feedback for this session and this seemed like a topic they were nervous for especially with lots of applications coming out in the next couple of months. We will definitely be holding this session again next term.

Session #7- Diversity

This session facilitate activities that introduce the many stigmas present in today's society associated with race, ethnicity, gender, religion and socioeconomic status. We emphasize the importance of using inclusive language and discuss the differences between terms such as equity,

equality and privilege. Diversity services provided Jane and Giancarlo with feedback on this session and this consultation ensured our activities were relevant to a first year setting.

Session #8 Life after Spark, #9 Change the World, and #10 Oh the Places You'll Go will be happening in the next few weeks and will be reported on in December in my last report for the term.

ACADEMIC ESCAPE ROOM WORKSHOP

The academic escape room workshop in collaboration with MSU Macademics was held on Thursday October 5th from 7-9pm. There were 3 themed rooms (a cafe, a tutorial room, and a library) that each held multiple clues in each surrounding the topics of studying, midterms, and academic help/support. Students were to solve the puzzles in each room to get to the next while subtly absorbing academic tips. While effectively planned, we did not receive the turn out we were expecting especially considering we revamped the lecture style event from past years into escape rooms. We had 20 people attend the workshop however the students who came thoroughly enjoyed it. For future years we recommend moving the workshop to early September while there is still hype and students aren't busy with midterms. Another possibility is to cut the workshop idea all together and instead host a "Cookies and Cram" event where students can drop in and study with TL's and friends. This more low-key chill event where students can bring there event may entice more students to come out and we can look into booking a whole floor in the library (Ex: 2nd floor commons in Mills). A huge shoutout to Lisa and Sarah our Events Coordinators for planning a great event and putting in such creativity for each room. Another huge thank you to Macademics for helping to provide snacks a fun photobooth at the end for students to take pictures at once they escaped.

TL SOCIAL #1 - HALLOWEEN

Our first TL Social was held on Friday October 20th from 6-9pm in IAHS. We bought mini pumpkins and had a pumpkin painting station, as well as a station with candy and each TL had a personalized bag made for them to go "trick or treating" at our station. We played the classic childhood family channel movie Halloweentown in the background so TL's could choose from a variety of activities to take part in as well as converse with each other. We had many members of our team come that night and each had lots of positive feedback. Having these social is critical for the Spark team because unlike a conference environment we don't have the opportunity to see the whole staff team all of the time. We will continue to host 3 more TL Socials (1 in December, February, and April).

PUMPKIN PICKING

Wonderful TL James King posted in our facebook group one day and got a group of us out for pumpkin picking at Dynments Farm on Saturday October 21st. This was not something we had planned going into the year and it ended up being so much fun! I truly appreciate TL's stepping up and making plans amongst each other because it provides another low-key opportunity to bond with each other in addition to our socials. It was a great weekend and TL's have expressed positive feedback to doing more activities like this or going to the movies, out for dinner, etc on our own time to continue building friendships outside of Spark.

TL 1 ON 1 CHECK-INS

Since we have reached the half way point of the term we have spent the past week conducting Team Leader check ins. Sehar, Volunteer Coordinator has checked in with 20 TL's and I have checked in with the other 20 (we will switch people next term). Huge shoutout to Sehar for supporting TL's so well - they really enjoy her little messages and personal check ins! These check ins work to ensure TL's feel supported, comfortable facilitating session, and mediate any tension between co's if anything arise. So far I am happy to report there have been no conflicts between the team! Everyone enjoys working with their co, attend trainings, and spending time with their students. We have received lots of feedback about our sessions from these 1 on 1's which will be super helpful for revamping sessions for next term. I am SO thankful to say that I get to be part of such a wonderful, uplifting, and inspiring team. It is great to step back each week in training and watch them interact with each other - it always puts a smile on my face.

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

Spark First Year Formal

While planning for this event is super exciting it is a little stressful working with our current budget. 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. Currently sit down dinner is \$35 a person, however we only want to charge first years \$30. This means if Spark compensates for \$5 on the first 300 people we will need \$1500, and our venue already cost \$1500 deposit. Currently, Haley, Sarah, and Lisa are looking to fundraising and Hazra, the FYC Coordinator is partnering with us to run the event and we are yet to meet with Rez Life as they will be donating some funds.

TL Holiday Social

Our second social will be happening on Friday December 1st from 6-9pm. We will be having Mac Improv team/Macappella performing for our team, a potluck, a holiday movie (I hope it's Home Alone) and be handing out small holiday gifts to our team!

Closing Ceremonies

Closing ceremonies will be on Monday December 4th in Bridges Cafe for all of our fall term students. We will be having a coffee house where students can perform individually or with their session groups, as well as mingle and snack throughout the night to wrap up a great term.

BUDGET

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	McMaster Student's Union								
2	Dept. 0125 - SPARK								
3	For the Five Months Ending September 30, 2017								
4		Current	Prior Yr.	Current	Prior Yr.	Prior Yr.	Approved	% Budget	
5		Month	Month	YTD	YTD	YE	Budget	Used	
6		September	September	2017-18	2016-17	2016-17	2018	To Date	
7									
8	All:								
9	5003-0125 SPARK - OFFICE SUPPLIES					\$54.00	\$60.00	0.00%	
10	5101-0125 SPARK - TELEPHONE	\$21.84		\$54.60		\$76.44	\$60.00	91.00%	
11	6103-0125 SPARK - ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS	\$138.09	\$88.71	\$1,638.09	\$88.71	\$3,240.88	\$3,000.00	54.60%	
12	6501-0125 SPARK - ADV. & PROMOTION	\$2,980.00	\$700.65	\$3,075.40	\$1,564.55	\$2,110.40	\$3,000.00	102.51%	
13	6802-0125 SPARK - LEADER TRAINING	\$63.00	\$289.44	\$132.98	\$289.44	\$710.63	\$750.00	17.73%	
14	7001-0125 SPARK - WAGES	\$689.85	\$800.83	\$3,288.10	\$1,580.85	\$5,987.25	\$7,500.00	43.84%	
15	7101-0125 SPARK - BENEFITS	\$54.93	\$42.80	\$252.16	\$93.51	\$406.12	\$540.00	46.70%	
16									
17	Total All	\$3,947.71	\$1,922.43	\$8,441.33	\$3,617.06	\$12,585.72	\$14,910.00	56.62%	
18									
19								41.67%	
20									
21									

VOLUNTEERS

This team is still going strong! The level of engagement and passion never ceases to amaze me. After wrapping up our 1 on 1 check ins I am excited to implement all of the feedback TL's have provided. We will also be switching up co-pairings for next term and TL's are excited to have the opportunity to work closely with another member of the team.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Spark First Year Formal Budget

After drafting up a report to send to Residence Life with the reasons for a large scale first year event as well as providing a budget breakdown, Residence Life has declined providing us with any funding or donations. This is especially frustrating on my end especially after the dismissal of the Inter-Residence Council Formal. With the huge success of last year's event there is clearly a want for a first year formal. We expanded on the formal venue as well as provided a 3 course meal this year however, this involves getting creative with funding this event. Without the support of Residence Life which is what we were greatly depending on, my exec team is looking into fundraising in addition to the funds FYC is supporting us with while collaborating for them. Moving into next year's Spark and FYC budget I hope we can look into expanding to better meet the needs of a formal while still having enough to run our service for the year.

SUCSESSES

October has truly established close relationships and routine and I am so proud of the exec team and our team of TL's. They have each found their unique ways to facilitate sessions and connect with students and it is so rewarding to see on my end!

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:

- November 16th: First year Formal
- December 1st: TL Social #2
- December 4th: Closing Ceremonies
- TL co swap
- Session revamp
- Guidebook release