



REPORT

From the office of the...
Spark Coordinator

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Lindsay D'Souza
SUBJECT: Spark Report #5
DATE: Friday, December 1st, 2017

UPDATE

We are officially done Term 1!! Last Thursday (Nov 30th) was the very last session night for the Fall Term. I am incredibly proud of this team – they have been working to help support students for over 10 weeks now and there is no thanks that is big enough to encompass the positive change they have created on campus.

SERVICE USAGE

From my last report, you had requested to see some numbers based on our retention and how retention compares from last year. This year retention strategies were placed into the ordering of the session. We found that in year's previous, starting with heavier sessions in the first four weeks turned students away. This year we started with more session that focus on building group dynamic and support. Once we had maintained a solid retention or familiar faces the first few weeks that is when we dove in to larger concepts. Another retention strategy is left of to the responsibility of the Team Leaders to engage with their students outside of session. By sending weekly reminders to individual students (rather than mass messaging) it shows our students we really do make time for each one of them. This engagement helps motivate first years to take that break and come to session each week. We also tried increasing group numbers this year. Last year we had 10 students max per group and had approximately 5 students show up each week in each group. This year I increased that number to 12-13 max students per group and we have an average of 6-7 students per group come out. In comparison to last year, retention is more or less the same. Spark is unique in that we do not force first years to come back each week which

adds to the nature of Spark being a de-stressing service they can access rather than another “mandatory” class to their schedules. Knowing they can skip a week and still be welcomed back is very much the message we are trying to send: that support will always be here.

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

Mentorship Program

We have now finished all 10 sessions of the Fall Term. Jane and Giancarlo have really out done themselves in terms of creating 10 weeks-worth of material for students and Team Leaders to use to thrive and build strong connections. In my last report I had described sessions #1-7 in detail and below you can find descriptions for the last 3: Life after Spark, Change the World, and Oh the Places You’ll Go.

Session #8 – Life after Spark

This session focused on helping students to grow comfortable with some of the options they will be faced with in the coming months transitioning into second year. Some of these topics include finding a student house, budgeting, or cooking. For this sessions TL’s and students had the opportunity to go through common questions and concerns regarding rent, finding a house, transportation, neighborhoods etc. Additionally, groups got to cook easy-10 minute go-to meals that will be useful for next year when they may be living on their own and start preparing their own meals/snacks. Groups had the opportunity to make 2 separate snacks with their groups: a yogurt parfait snack and a hummus and chip snack. **This took lots of material prep and logistics and coinciding with the week of formal so shoutout to Jane and GC for really taking the lead here when I was focused on formal.**

Session #9 – Change the World

This session focused on helping students see that they are capable of accomplishing anything they put their mind to by facilitate reflection upon their first year struggles and achievements thus far. We tried to instill the idea that failure is natural part of life and can be an opportunity to learn and grow to motivate students to continue pursuing their goals. Activities focused on goal-charting and prioritizing important things in our life.

Session #10 – Oh the Places You’ll Go

This session was focused on empowering students as they leave the Spark sessions program. The aim was to fill students with confidence as they begin the next chapter of their lives outside of weekly sessions and the support of Spark. We assure students that they will always have a group of friends that they can rely on should they need any support or friendship in the coming future. One of the activities involved making the traditional spark burn bracelets – we hope students wear them as a memory of the friends they made in their groups and can wear it when they walk across the stage at the end of their time at McMaster. (I still have mine on!)

Spark First Year Formal

YAY we had successful formal! Huge shoutout to Sarah and Lisa for working tirelessly and putting together such a wonderful event where 177 first years and a bunch of Team Leaders clearly had a ton of fun! Reflecting on this experience formal's can be stressful given the size and monetary associations that come with such an event. Based on the advice of the last Spark we went to a bigger venue and had a sit-down meal. This is something to reconsider for next year – while the dinner went well, it is a tricky bargain to navigate because we had to meet a minimum number of ticket sales to make it worthwhile. For next year some things to consider are first year midterm schedules (which is tricky because we book our venue in July), other campus events happening around the same time, and partnership with campus events. (See below for a few members of my AMAZING team).



TL Holiday Social

Our second social happened on Friday December 1st from 6-9pm. We had all the Team Leaders come out for a fun end of term celebration for all their hard work where we had pizza, snacks, a holiday movie and a gift swap. I was so happy to see the team all in one room as this was a great de-stressor and hangout with friends before we gear up for exams.

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

Closing Ceremonies

Closing ceremonies is happening on Tuesday Dec 5th in bridges from 8-11pm, feel free to drop by! This coffeehouse is for all of our fall term students and their Team Leaders. Students can perform individually or with their session groups, as well as mingle and snack throughout the night to wrap up a great term.

Term 2 Student Registration, Sessions Revamp and Co-Swap

As exam season approaches we are gearing up for second term. Student Registration is set to open in January and we hope to fill up again! Sessions revamp process is currently taking place – this is where we collect feedback from students and Team Leaders and take this into consideration when reviewing session activities for next term. Furthermore we switch up the co-ships so everyone on the team has the experience of working with someone new!

BUDGET

<i>McMaster Student's Union</i>							
<i>Dept. 0125 - SPARK</i>							
<i>For the Six Months Ending October 31, 2017</i>							
	Current	Prior Yr.	Current	Prior Yr.	Prior Yr.	Approved	% Budget
	Month	Month	YTD	YTD	YE	Budget	Used
	October	October	2017-18	2016-17	2016-17	2018	To Date
All:							
5003-0125 SPARK - OFFICE SUPPLIES					54.00	60.00	0.00%
5101-0125 SPARK - TELEPHONE	10.92		65.52		76.44	60.00	109.20%
6103-0125 SPARK - ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS	(216.98)	1,665.79	1,421.11	1,754.50	3,240.88	3,000.00	47.37%
6501-0125 SPARK - ADV. & PROMOTION		21.70	3,075.40	1,586.25	2,110.40	3,000.00	102.51%
6802-0125 SPARK - LEADER TRAINING			132.98	289.44	710.63	750.00	17.73%
7001-0125 SPARK - WAGES	689.39	670.58	3,977.49	2,251.43	5,987.25	7,500.00	53.03%
7101-0125 SPARK - BENEFITS	54.93	56.48	307.09	149.99	406.12	540.00	56.87%
Total All	538.26	2,414.55	8,979.59	6,031.61	12,585.72	14,910.00	60.23%
							50.0%

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

We had a great term, and I'm pretty darn proud. As we gear up for next term, there are no current challenges to report.

SUCSESSES

November was truly a test of our strength as team - between formal, school assignments and midterms coming to a close and the days getting darker and colder, we definitely pushed through. Our socials, sessions, events, and beautiful promo have all been a huge success for the term.

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:

- December: Sessions revamp process
- January: Term 2 student registration and Team Leader re-training