



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## Spark Coordinator

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TO: Members of the Executive Board  
FROM: Lindsay D'Souza  
SUBJECT: Spark Report #7  
DATE: Wednesday, March 21st, 2018

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### **UPDATE**

We are almost officially done one whole year of Spark!! With only two weeks of sessions left in the term, closing ceremonies, and our last staff social I am so proud of everything this team has accomplished.

### **SERVICE USAGE**

Student turnout has been lower this term which is a result of low registration. Registration was kept open all term and there was no cap on the number of students since we never reach full capacity in every group. This term we have a lot of students who are registered in the service bring their friends from outside Spark (friends from residence or other activities) which was cool because even though these students hadn't necessarily signed up formally, we were still able to support them and have them come back. Out of 116 students registered, (which is lower than our projected goal of 200 from first term) we see an average of 4-5 students in each group showing up per week.

**Sessions:** Thank you to Jane Luft and Giancarlo Da Ré for making 20 novel sessions this year each with a unique perspective and goal of supporting first years. Session logistics was always smooth with these two leading the charge and know that there are first years out there who benefitted from a session that you made!

**Events:** Thank you Lisa Tran and Sarah Mohiuddin for the amazing workshops and Formal this year. From taking the lead on collaborations, keeping me calm during Formal, and always staying positive these two definitely raised the bar. From new workshop ideas, to always thinking 2 steps ahead, they were on the ball!

**Promo:** Thank you Haley Greene for your tireless dedication to design and promotions. We all know graphic design is not my passion and if it were up to me I would use Microsoft paint... so shout out to this girl for always creating and executing beautiful design and promo strategies to capture the first-year audience and making Spark aesthetically pleasing.

**Volunteer:** Thank you Sehar Arfeen for planning such engaging socials, and for always supporting myself and the volunteer team. She made each individual TL feel so special and paid attention to the small details when it came to showing them her appreciation. TL's definitely walked away with the recognition they deserve.

**Demographics for the year:**

	TERM 1 DEMOGRAPHICS	TERM 2 DEMOGRAPHICS
International Students	30	20
First Generation Students	41	9
Off Campus Students	32	24
Did not attend Horizons prior to Spark	189	97

There was a total of 364 students formally registered for Spark this year. (This number excludes students who drop by without registering).

**PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

**Applicant's Workshop**

As in previous years, Spark teamed up again with MSU CLAY and MSU Horizons to put on our Applicant's Workshop for all students in IAHS from 3pm-6pm on Sunday, February 11<sup>th</sup>. There were 3 mini workshops, which included one-on-one mock interviews, group mock interviews, and tips on written applications as well as building your resume and cover letter. These workshops equipped students with the tools they needed to better prepare themselves for both an MSU interview and real-world interview and provided exposure to the interview process. Students also get the opportunity to mingle and chat with student volunteers Spark, Horizons, and CLAY. Turnout was not as high as we had hoped but the 10 students that came out felt they learned valuable information from their feedback. We may look into revamping this workshop for next year because there are still valuable resources and takeaways that should be offered.

**Off-Campus Living Workshop**

Our off-campus living workshop was a huge success on March 5<sup>th</sup>. Our events Coordinators Lisa and Sarah paired up with FYC to run this event in Hedden Hall and we had partners services such as Mac BreadBin, Compass, SCSN, and SSC come in and table. Students were able to visit each table and have their workshop passports stamped at each station they visited. Students were able to take home resources and ask questions to each table about food security, the Hamilton community, and what they should be looking for in terms of living arrangements.

**Staff Social #3 Spark Camping!**

TL's don't always have the opportunity to see each other than weekly trainings or socials so we thought we would make this one extra special in the area of team bonding! While it may have been cold outside we brought TL's Spark camping – an indoor sleepover experience. We rented out a room in PC, had lots of snacks, hung up twinkly lights, watched Patrick Chan skate in the Olympics on our big projector screen, and played board games. In the morning, we partnered with the club Lift Church who provided pancake breakfast.

## UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

### Closing Ceremonies

Closing ceremonies is happening on Wednesday April 4th in BSB from 6pm-9pm, feel free to drop by! This coffeehouse is for all of our Spark students from the whole year and their Team Leaders. Students and TL's can mingle with their groups from both terms, play board games, and enjoy some pizza and snack to finish up the year and celebrate their growth from their first year at university.

### Staff Social #4 (Last one)

Our last staff social of the year will be on Friday April 6<sup>th</sup> at the Phoenix. At the last social of the year we have booked out the back half of the restaurant for our staff team, ordered platters of food, and will be giving out our staff appreciation awards and gifts! I am super excited to have our team come together and celebrate all our hard work one last time.

### 2018-2019 Executive Hiring

Executive Hiring Applications for the Spark executive team for the upcoming year are open until Sunday, March 25th at 11:59pm. Interviews will be held shortly after and we hope to have a team hired by the last day of classes! I'm so excited for Jane Luft the incoming Coordinator to have a team! Please help promote these apps!

## CURRENT BUDGET

ACCOUNT CODE	ITEM	BUDGET / COST
5003-0125	SPARK - OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$60.00
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$0.00
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$60.00
6102-0125	SPARK - ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS	3,000.00
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$2,763.25
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$236.75
6501-0125	SPARK - ADV. & PROMOTION	\$3,000.00
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$1,392.68
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$1,607.32
6802-0125	SPARK - LEADER TRAINING	\$750.00
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$406.60
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$343.40
<b>TOTALS</b>		
<b>TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING</b>		\$6,810.00
<b>TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING</b>		\$4,562.53
<b>REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING</b>		\$2,247.47

In the next few weeks I will be printing/purchasing our staff appreciation gifts, and food for our closing ceremonies so I am projecting the final budget to look like the following affecting annual campaigns, ad/promo and leader training.

### FINAL BUDGET

ACCOUNT CODE	ITEM	BUDGET / COST
5003-0125	SPARK - OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$60.00
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$0.00
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$60.00
6102-0125	SPARK - ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS	3,000.00
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$2,963.25
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$36.75
6501-0125	SPARK - ADV. & PROMOTION	\$3,000.00
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$1,902.68
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$1,097.32
6802-0125	SPARK - LEADER TRAINING	\$750.00
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$746.60
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$3.40

### VOLUNTEERS

This team has don't a phenomenal job this year! I am sad to know we only have a few more session left in the term, but they have put in so much effort to help ease the transition to university. Our campus is so much better because of these student leaders I am happy to now call friends. I have no doubt they will continue to make a positive impact wherever they go. A special thank you to: Alessandra Ceccacci, Anika Spasov, Beverley Osei, Christine Devine, Danielle Campagnolo, Devin Roshan, Dexter Choi, Emily Yang, Erin Crook, Ezza Jalil, Giancarlo Da Ré, Greg Rutherford, Haley Greene, Isabella Fany, Ismail Hweija, James King, Jane Luft, Jessica Sadri-Gerrior, Josh Yachouh, Jovan Sahi, Kathryn Chen, Katie Maxwell, Kulsum Saeed, Larissa Turco, Lauren MacLeod, Lisa Tran, Matthew Shannon, Muhammed Ali, Naomi Wong, Nikhail Singh, Parsa Mehraban Far, Reidun Garapick, Rhys Thomas, Ryan Threndyle, Sapriya Birk, Sara Markovic, Sarah Mohiuddin, Sehar Arfeen, Sallie Han, Yaanu Jeyakumar, and Yuan Qiu.

### CHALLENGES AND IMPROVEMENTS FOR NEXT YEAR

Spark didn't have many challenges throughout the year but the one constant (and only challenge) I really found myself reporting on all year in all my EB reports was the budget for Spark Formal.

### **Spark Formal**

While planning for this event is super exciting it is a little stressful working with our current budget. Historically, (when I started first year and prior to) this event was housed under the Maroons as Maroons formal but was passed over to Spark to be marketed as the First Year Formal in collaboration with FYC. While a largely attended event every year there is always debate on how it should be run. In the past there was only a pop bar, which expanded to a pop/alcohol bar, which expanded to this year's sit-down meal and unlimited pop bar. With a sit-down dinner (which we had this year for the first time) this would require a larger budget and we are hoping campus partners will be generous in providing monetary support next year as this is the only formal exclusively for ALL first years across campus. This year sit-down dinner was \$35 a person, however we only wanted to charge first years \$30. This meant Spark compensated for \$5 on the first 300 people which required will need \$1500 from our end in addition to the \$1500 deposit we had already put down on our venue at the Hamilton Convention Centre. Res Life promised us a monetary donation at the beginning of the year if the event was a dry event and after fulfilling our side of the agreement Res Life did not provide us any funds which put us out money not budgeted for even with FYC contributing \$1000. Next year we should work on this partnership with Res Life and look into partnering with MSU Campus Events.

Haley, Sarah, and Lisa also looked into fundraising and we were able to secure a donation of \$400 from the president's office which made running programming for the rest of the year less tight. I think we could have received more donations if we had started this earlier in the summer or fall term. Incoming Coordinator Jane Luft has added a small fundraising role to the Events Coordinator's job descriptions which involves emailing out an already made sponsorship package to a pre-existing list of organizations/partners. It is a very minor addition to the role and does not require hiring a whole other exec member.

### **Student Attendance at workshops/term 2 sessions**

Attendance at workshops all year has been considerably low (under 50) despite all the effort going in to planning and promoting the workshops. We did find that our last workshop "Life After First Year" had the biggest attendance and this event was in Hedden Hall instead of our usual IAHS location. Therefore, something to maybe improve on next year is having our events either in residence or more central places like MUSC.

As previously mentioned, student registration is lower than usual for Term 2. We believe it may be due to not having the hype of our Welcome Week strategy which as mentioned was a huge success and gave us a lot more visibility and first years were excited to try a bunch of new things! We still used all of our regular promotional strategies from last term so that social media groups and different networks were still receiving the same level of attention so any ideas on how to improve next year would be a good direction to follow up in.

## **SUCSESSES OF THIS YEAR**

### **Team Leader Hiring**

Our promotions planning and outreach for Spark has always had a great track record and level of reachability. We received 200 applications for a very competitive 34 spots and our demographic for new opportunities were: 5 returning Team Leaders and 29

individuals who have never done Spark before (this excludes the 6 exec members and only accounts for the 34 people we hired). Haley's promotional material for our Team Leader positions were positively received and in one week alone we had reached 8,621 people, a 24% increase from the week prior and our TL video was viewed 2300 times in one week! This hiring process and promotional outreach is something that should be continued.

### **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 continued to work with MUSC and had all our session rooms booked for the whole year! We look forward to utilizing this space for sessions for next year 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.

### **Welcome Week Residence Talks/Pop Up Tent**

This year, I really wanted to improve Spark's visibility and promotion during Welcome Week. One of our key strategies was using word of mouth during the week to help excite students for registration that would be opening up right after welcome week. In the past, the Coordinator had gone to residences to speak about the program but I wanted to involve as many different individuals as possible to try to provide a larger network of people that students could reach out to besides myself. To do this the most effectively for residence, I delegated this task to past and present TL's who had been involved with the service that were repaying a building and they had the opportunity to speak at the residence opening and closing ceremonies. This not only provided two scheduled opportunities for students to learn about Spark, but it generated a lot of excitement and questions from students, and TL's were happy to be involved during the process. For faculty reps, they were given rave cards and also helped talk to students about the program. Our pop up tent (Spark Chill Zone) also proved to be successful in terms of visibility on campus. We had our pop up tent set up the Monday, Wednesday and Thursday of welcome week where students could come chat with TLs, grab an informational rave card, and take part in low key programming such as colouring and making stress balls. In combination with the residence talks we had a lot of students come up to our tent and say they heard about our service from their reps which is exactly the result we were hoping for. We purchased a gazebo that can now be used for future Spark Coordinators during welcome week or for other events during the year. This was a HUGE HUGE reason was our registration was so high for first term and definitely a strategy to continue into next year!

### **Night Before Classes**

This event was a HUGE success! This event was specific welcome week programming back when I was in first year, and after its absence for the past few years we thought we would bring it back so it was the first time Spark took part in this. In partnership with MSU Horizons, Christine Yachouh and I gathered both Horizon LD's and Spark TL's to meet in music atrium on the evening of September 4th. We set up a few tables and a powerpoint with helpful tips/resources and this was the main meeting location of the event. As students arrived TL's/LD'S would pair up and take small groups of students to go find their classes, buildings, or answer answer questions. While we were only expecting around 50 students to show up after the hustle and bustle of welcome week,

around 200+ students showed up! This is definitely programming we are looking to do next year or bring back during welcome week.

## TESTIMONIALS

Spark continues to be a pivotal service for first year transition and the increasing awareness of the positivity formal and informal mentorship relationships are having in post-secondary institutions, not only for first years but as well upper year students. Here is some testimonials from first year students on how Spark has impacted their university experience:

- *“Thank you for being such an awesome TL/mentor/friend! I loved getting to know you this year. Thank you for helping me transition from high school to my first year of university with ease. I'm so glad that we've gotten the chance to catch up a couple of times and I hope to see you soon :)”*
- *“Thank you for all the helpful advice you have provided me throughout, the school year. You definitely made my first year feel like home!”*
- *“Thanks for always being so positive and encouraging during sessions. Thank you for letting me find a space to be myself and feel comfortable.”*
- *“Thank you for telling me about all the amazing Mac services, helping me academically and just always offering to help! You are an amazing leader and friend and I will never forget Thursday night Sparksters.”*

## 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](mailto:spark@msu.mcmaster.ca)

Here are some important upcoming dates for Spark that I will be discussing in future reports:

-April 4<sup>th</sup> 2018: Closing Ceremonies

-April 6<sup>th</sup> 2018: Final Staff Social

## CONCLUSION

Spark was a huge success and would not have been possible without all of the support and help we have gotten! So many people were crucial in the success of Spark: the BOD, the PTM team, full-time staff of the MSU, a wonderful and passionate Executive Team, 41 amazing volunteers, community partners, and 364+ students who were brave enough to step outside of their comfort zones and come out to all our sessions and events! I love Spark with all of my heart and seeing Spark evolve from a pilot service in my first year (where I was the first group of students to ever experience a session), to being part of the SRA that ratified it into a real service in 2015, to being Sessions Coordinator, a Team Leader, and now present-day Coordinator, I am so thankful for everyone who continues to make Spark a success! Mentorship is such a crucial part of university that is definitely becoming something of increasing value and something I hope everyone can experience at some point in their lives. I can personally say it was the mentorship of upper year students who helped support and push me from my first day at Mac to where I am today.

Being Spark Coordinator was something that I never imagined I would have applied for/

or would have been able to do. This service has given me confidence in myself and my abilities and has been one of THE MOST challenging, magical and rewarding experiences of my undergraduate career. Thank you to those who came before me - to the 2014-2015 team (Jimmy Long I'm still waiting for my Spark certificate btw) the 2015-2016 exec, who quickly became the funniest, weirdest but also most reliable family I could have asked for that year, and to the 2016-2017 team for setting the bar so incredibly high. Finally thank you to my friends and family for always trying your best to understand the work I do. You were there every step of the way and it has not gone unnoticed.

Best,

Lindsay D'Souza  
MSU Spark Coordinator 2017-2018