



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## Spark Coordinator

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TO: Members of the Executive Board  
FROM: Jane Luft  
SUBJECT: Spark Report #1  
DATE: Tuesday, July 3, 2018

### **YEARPLAN UPDATE**

The past two months have been very busy for Spark! After hiring the executive team on April 6<sup>th</sup>, the entire team had an executive retreat on April 16<sup>th</sup> where we became acquainted with one another, set expectations and group norms, and developed our vision for Spark as a team. We began meeting weekly starting May 14<sup>th</sup>, after everyone had settled where they'd be spending their summer and have made terrific progress since then! We are on target when referring the year plan as we have established a consistent structure of executive and 1-on-1 meetings, solidified important dates for the remainder of the year, and developed our Team Leader Application questions. Our major challenges have mainly been scheduling conflicts and some technical difficulties when meeting online as a group. Our major successes have been getting a great start on each portfolio (Sessions, Events, Promotions & Publications, and Volunteer) and developing individual year plans to prepare for the upcoming year.

### **SERVICE USAGE**

Student registration will open during Welcome Week so that we can have students sign up when they hear about Spark during the week. We are aiming to register about 11 students per group for first term, making a total of 220 first year students who will be supported through Spark. May @ Mac was a big success where we spoke with many potential McMaster first years and told them about Spark. We received 8 new emails from first years who wanted to be notified when registration opens and we gave away rave cards as well as 25 lanyards to students who were interested in Spark.

In terms of other quantities of service usage, 6 executive members were hired in April and 11 students have explicitly expressed their interest in becoming a Spark Team Leader by contacting my Spark email address. The executive team has had 7 weekly Tuesday meetings ranging in length from 30-75 minutes each. I have had 16 bi-weekly one-on-one meetings with each of the executive members or co-pairs about their respective portfolios.

## PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

**May @ Mac:** On May 12<sup>th</sup>, 3 members of our executive team helped run the Spark table during May @ Mac. As mentioned in *Service Usage*, we gave away rave cards and lanyards to interested students and managed to secure a number of email addresses to add to our mailing list. The interest in Spark from prospective students was very exciting and we even received the comment that the fact that we had a service for first years like Spark at McMaster set the university apart from other schools. Perhaps Spark should be getting funding from Student Recruitment...

**TL Application Promo Video:** Thanks to the lovely Communications Officer, Haley Greene, we were able to film a promotional video for Team Leader applications. Our executive team moved all around campus taking video clips in different locations and had a lot of fun together!

**Sessions 1-3 Developed:** Spark's Sessions Coordinators have been hard at work over the past few weeks creating the first few sessions for our weekly mentorship program. The first three session themes are "Intro to Spark", "Change the World", and "Discover Your City". While maintaining some of the staple Spark activities, the Sessions Coordinators have created 3 exciting sessions that will engage students in their first weeks of Spark.

**TL Application Questions:** After brainstorming over 80 possible application questions, our team collectively decided on four questions that we believe will effectively evaluate applicants for the role of a Spark Team Leader.

**Rooms Booked:** Thanks to the work of our Volunteer Coordinator, we have secured all our rooms for first semester sessions and for our interview weekend. This is an important logistical step for ensuring a smooth term of sessions!

## UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

**Team Leader Hiring:** We have decided on dates for our hiring process and are looking forward to hiring an awesome team of volunteers. Our written applications will be open from July 6<sup>th</sup> to July 27<sup>th</sup>. After marking and sending out interview offers, we will conduct interviews from August 17<sup>th</sup> to August 19<sup>th</sup>. We will send out offers shortly afterward in order to have a team before Welcome Week starts to help with promoting student registration.

**Horizons Successfest:** Spark is registered to participate in Horizons Successfest happening on the morning of Saturday, July 28<sup>th</sup> during the annual Horizons conference. This is a great opportunity for us to reach out to first year McMaster students to get them involved with Spark for the upcoming school year.

**Welcome Week:** Welcome Week is another great opportunity to engage students in Spark and create a presence among first years. By using our tent

and pop-up banners we plan to create a physical presence at key Welcome Week events like Faculty Fest where students will have time to visit us and hear about our programs. We will also provide some kind of casual activity that creates incentive to visit our tent and have the opportunity to hear about our service. We also plan to collaborate with Hedden Hall by hosting a session at their leadership workshop to support their Living Learning Community.

**Executive Retreat:** The Spark executive team has been working so hard over the past couple of months and unfortunately most of us cannot physically be together for the summer. We hope to plan a fun retreat of some kind early in the school year that will help to show appreciation for their efforts. It will also serve to strengthen our bonds as an executive team and start off our operational term on an energetic and positive note.

**BUDGET**

<i>ACCOUNT CODE</i>	<i>ITEM</i>	<i>BUDGET / COST</i>
5003-0125	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$0.00
OFFICE SUPPLIES	REMAINING IN LINE	\$60.00
6102-0125	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$0.00
ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS	REMAINING IN LINE	\$3,000.00
6501-0125	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$0.00
ADV. & PROMOTIONS	REMAINING IN LINE	\$3,000.00
6802-0125	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$0.00
LEADER TRAINING	REMAINING IN LINE	\$750.00
<b>TOTALS</b>		
<b>TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING</b>		<b>\$6,810.00</b>
<b>TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING</b>		<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING</b>		<b>\$6,810.00</b>

Nothing has been spent in any of the budget lines yet as we haven't needed to get any promotional material made by the Underground or buy any new materials yet. Volunteer training costs are also nonexistent until we hire a team in August. That being said, we are preparing to spend money from the Advertising & Promotions Line soon when we ask the Underground to create material for Team Leader Hiring. We also are receiving quotes from venues for First Year Formal happening later in the year which we will need to put a deposit on in the coming months. We plan to work with other campus groups including FYC and RezLife to financially help with formal.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

With only a team of seven at this point in the year, there haven't been too many volunteer dynamic issues. After being hired in April, the executive team had a group dinner and then went to Light Up the Night to get to know one another. We also took a group photo with the outgoing executive team who congratulated the new team and gave them encouragement for their new roles. Our group is getting along quite well so far and having lots of fun while also being productive.

The main challenge with our group of volunteers is the conducting all meetings online with temperamental technology. GoogleHangouts has worked pretty well but there is always the occasional technical difficulty that makes clear communication a struggle. Another challenge was guiding one of the executive members during the first month of their term while they waited for a transition report. Without any direct experience in that portfolio, I found it difficult to direct the executive member on what they could do while they waited. We eventually received the report which made getting started on the portfolio go much smoother and relieved some pressure off of myself.

A success of our small team of volunteers is that we have been keeping each other updated on one another's lives throughout the summer. At the start of every weekly meeting we share a "Life Update" to ensure we are staying up-to-date on each others' lives and getting to know each other outside of our roles in Spark. We also have been working to provide opportunities for professional development by giving executive members a lot of freedom within their portfolios. I want to give each member the opportunity to grow through their role by challenging them to be creative and bring their visions for Spark to life. We also have been holding feedback sessions during meetings for executive members to pitch their ideas to the rest of the group and improve what they are working on. Giving and receiving feedback is a great opportunity for professional development.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES**

One of our major challenges is scheduling our interview weekend around everyone's schedules. We have planned for interviews to take place August 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> but there are two members who have conflicts during the day on Saturday which is typically the day most full of interview slots. To work around our limited amount of possible interview time, we are discussing shortening the interviews from 3 hours to 2.5 hours or shorter to allow for more rounds on Saturday and Friday. We have yet to finalize the logistics of this weekend in order to accommodate everyone's schedule but we plan to work on this soon and have times solidified.

Another challenge we have not yet run into but are anticipating is going over budget in the Annual Campaigns (6102-0125) and Leader Training (6802-0125) lines. The reason we anticipate this is that a lot of costs from last year were recorded under Advertising & Promotions (6501-0125) because there was a lot of extra money in that line because the Promotions & Publications Coordinator designed all promotional material and there was virtually no money spent at the Underground for these costs. After meeting with Michael Wooder and Haley Greene, we know that we will be spending money on promotional

materials from the Underground this year and there likely will not be so much extra money in the Promotions budget to use on other expenses. With the cost of Spark Formal, sessions/workshop materials, and food for volunteer training/appreciation/socials, the \$3000 + \$750 budget is used up quite quickly. One strategy we are considering to address this is hosting a fundraiser in the fall for Spark Formal (one of the biggest expenses of the year).

## **SUCSESSES**

So far, the summer has been a big success as each executive member works to prepare for the upcoming school year. Our executive retreat was a lot of fun and helped set the stage for the rest of the year. We have had really great attendance at executive meetings and everyone has been making great progress on their portfolios and trying to complete as many tasks as possible during the summer before Spark becomes fully operational. A few of the wonderful executive members helped me out by running the table for May @ Mac without me there which definitely deserves a high five! We also managed to take executive photos and film a promotional video during the limited time that I was in town in June and managed to get almost all members in the video!

## **OTHER**

I apologize that I can't be at the Executive Board meeting in person to answer any questions but I am happy to answer them through Kristina or via email at [spark@msu.mcmaster.ca](mailto:spark@msu.mcmaster.ca). I appreciate your feedback so please feel free to share it with me at any time. Thank you for your time!