



REPORT

From the office of the...

Spark Coordinator

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Anika Spasov
SUBJECT: Spark Report 2
DATE: August 20th, 2019

YEARPLAN UPDATE

Hello again! The positive momentum has been continuing throughout the summer and we have a fantastic volunteer team. I cannot wait for first year students to begin engaging with the service in-person.

SERVICE USAGE

Our online presence has continued to grow throughout the summer. Currently, we have 2070 followers on Instagram which are almost exclusively first year McMaster students. This is almost a third of the entire incoming class! Students have continuously messaging us and asking us questions and I feel like we have already established ourselves a solid resource for first years. We continue to post tips and tricks on our page and have actually received countless message sand comments saying things like “wow this account is actually so useful”.

Additionally, we were invited to Horizons Successfest this year and it was a great day! We actually had a line outside of our table for most of the morning and had about 100 students sign-up for our email reminder list.

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

Between now and my previous EB report, we haven't had any events or projects. Volunteers have been posting introductions on our Facebook page and I'm really looking forward to getting to know everyone. Throughout the summer we have continued our weekly exec meetings and bi-weekly position check-ins. However, I did take a brief hiatus when I was gone for my sister's wedding and had family visiting. Now, I have begun individual check-ins, just to see how things are going for everyone individually and seeing what changes I should eb making going into the school year. I plan on asking my Exec to fill in an anonymous feedback form at the end of the summer so I can ensure a positive dynamic on our team going into the school year.

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

We have A LOT of upcoming events and projects coming up soon (shout-out to the ah-mazing Exec team for being so hard working and being so passionate about supporting first years). We have some Instagram take-overs

planned for this coming week with both @Macadmin and @mcmasteru. We plan on doing a digital tour for one of them and showing some 'hidden gems' on campus.

Next are our Welcome Week events. We were invited to join the Student Services Carnival on Monday August 26th, where we will have a table with our information and some swag, as well as a carnival game provided by the SSC. It is supposed to be a very large event specifically for first years and I hope the will provide Spark with lots of exposure. Additionally, we have planned a Pizza Paint Night on Tuesday August 27th from 7:00pm-9:00pm. We have received the materials from Amazon, but resolved an issue encountered with a cancelled order. On Wednesday August 28th from 2:00pm-4:00pm we will be running our Puppies, Popsicles and Peers event. I am personally super excited for this event. We are using old t-shirts which we will rip into strips and then braid into chew toys for dogs which we will donate to Ladybird Animal Sanctuary. This is so students can begin making connections and forming a support system at McMaster. This is then paired with therapy dogs we will have with us there as support for students, as Welcome Week can be a stressful time for students. This event has received lots of positive feedback on our Instagram story.

From Monday August 26th to Friday September 6th our first-year registration will be open. I am very hopeful that the size of our email reminder list and our presence in Welcome Week will translate well into registrations. We are really trying to promote meaningfully so students know what the mentorship program consists of and that students who are genuinely interested register and hopefully remain engaged throughout the year. I have spoken with students about the Spark Ambassadors as well, which seems to interest students who are hoping to dip their toes in volunteering with the school.

On Monday September 2nd we will be hosting the Night Before Classes event with Horizons. Since Clubsfest is 2-days this year, they are setting up in MUSC on this Monday. I've been in communication with Shelby about this and she has said we can use the outdoor Marketplace or a meeting room instead.

On Friday September 6th at 6:00pm we are hosting our team social and co-reveals! It'll be a little potluck and I'm excited for the full team to all meet each other. Then on September 7th-8th we are hosting our yearlong training and I am currently working on the slides for it with Pulkit. We have confirmed Tanya Kett from the SSC and Khadijeh Rakie for AOP. This year we also made the decision to have someone come in to run sexual violence training and Hagar from EIO will be coming in.

On Wednesday September 7th from 5:00pm-7:00pm we are hosting our TL-student Meet and Greet. The idea of this event is so we can bridge the gap between registration and the start of session on the week of September 16th. This way, students will stay excited about Spark and are more inclined to attend the first session. We have contacted Lift to provide us with pancakes and the Boardgame Club is providing us games for free (just with a \$60

deposit which will be returned afterwards). It will be an open event as well though, although we'll keep the promotions small. If there are any registration slots still available or if students need to switch session nights, they can easily do so on the spot.

We are also running our Hike and Hangout again through Dundas Peak and Lift pancakes. Currently it is scheduled for September 28th, however, we have heard folks talking about a 'Mac FOCO' which may be happening this weekend. Consequently, we may move it to another date and would love some thoughts on this.

Finally, we recently were invited by the SSC to attend an event for transfer and First Generation students. It will be held on Thursday September 5th and will be a great way to make connections with students who may benefit from the program. I am very excited about this event as this year I have been trying to better address the unique needs of First Generation students and this event aligns with my goals for Spark.

BUDGET

Here is my spending for Spark so far. Our deposit for formal was larger than it was last year, but the overall rental cost is much lower. We will make most, if not all of this, deposit back in ticket sales and sponsorship. I also have a lot of spending on here for the Welcome Week events we are hosting. Both events are being funded by WWSTAPC and I will receive complete refunds after Welcome Week. Consequently, it looks like I am in the negatives right now, but I let the VP Finance know about this in advance and we will be getting this money back shortly.

Another challenge is this potential 'FOCO' being the same time as our Hike and Hangout. I was hoping to get feedback on whether we should change the date of our event or not.

I also have been in contact with Campus Events regarding the new ticket fees for Eventbrite for First Year Formal. Trish laid it out very well for me and I am excited to have both online sales and Compass sales. The question of tax did come up though and I was bounced around a bit. We have never had to charge HST on our ticket sales in the past and already pay HST in our rental fees. I have spoken to VP Finance about this again and she seems confident we do not need to pay HST. I have one final meeting about this on Monday to confirm this. If we do have to pay HST, it will change our budget plans a fair bit, so hopefully we can continue not having to charge tax on our ticket sales.

Finally, there seems to be an issue with the EOHSS portal. I had all my events approved but had to resubmit them all again when it crashed. My new submissions have been approved by AVP Services, but it has not been approved by EOHSS even after 3 weeks. Welcome Week is coming up and they are still pending approval and we cannot book IAHS for our yearlong training until we get approval again. While the portal is easy to use, it has its challenges and has been incredibly slow at getting approval.

SUCCESSSES

Spark has continued to move forward and I am super pumped to kickstart our mentorship program. Honestly, I have had such a positive experience as a PTM so far and am so proud of all the things our team has accomplished already. I am hoping the momentum we have built up this summer translates into better retention in sessions and cannot wait for Spark to continue to grow.