



REPORT

From the office of the...

Spark Coordinator

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Anika Spasov
SUBJECT: Spark Report Final
DATE: March 30th, 2020

YEARPLAN UPDATE

Hello, for the *actual* last time! Thank you again for all of your help throughout the year and for supporting my ideas. I thought for my year-end report, I'd go through my Yearplan which I submitted at the start of the summer and discuss some of the Goals I wrote down.

Establish a consistent structure for weekly executive meetings and bi-weekly check-ins: This was done easily and I think the bi-weekly check-ins were really helpful. I did not continue the bi-weekly check-ins with individual Execs throughout the school year, but I think shifting them to monthly check-ins could be beneficial

Submit WWSTAPC proposals and brainstorm Welcome Week engagement: We submitted two proposals to WWSTAPC - Puppies, Popsicles & Peers and Pizza Paint Night. We got approval for both (but still waiting to receive the funds!). The events were super successful, with Puppies, Popsicles & Peers having over 400 students in attendance and Pizza Paint Night having around 200. I would really recommend applying to WWSTAPC again in the future for Welcome Week events. We were also able to do regular tenting with a spin-wheel and some activities throughout the week and also be apart of the Student Services Carnival. Altogether, our presence at Welcome Week heavily increased this year, resulting in over 321 students to register for sessions, causing us to hire an additional 2 Team Leaders.

Confirm TL application questions and hiring schedule. As well as revamp hiring process: We made a clear hiring schedule in advance, including things such as mock marking for both the applications and the interviews. We also hired about a month earlier this year which helped us create a team that was ready to go for Welcome Week and schedule them for activities. This year, we also were the first service ever to offer online group interviews. This had its challenges, but overall it was successful and I would recommend other services use it, but potentially use Zoom instead of Google Hangouts if its available (its more secure). I would also add more buffer times and in general reduce the amount of people in each group. Given the global environment right now, I anticipate more services may need to offer online group interviews this year. If anyone wants to use the schedule template I created (it incorporates both 3 individual stations and 3 group stations) for their interviews and want some advice, feel free to contact me!

Book Sessions rooms for MUSC: For first semester, we easily were able to get enough rooms at MUSC, but unfortunately, second semester we had to resort to asking other PTMs to book for

Spark under their booking privileges. Next year, I would suggest meeting with the VP Admin and potentially John to all discuss with MUSC and see if a special agreement can be made between MUSC and Spark. In this agreement, I would include that Spark agrees to return the keys by 7pm each night (which we have done the past 2 years), and that if we are not using rooms, we will cancel the booking in advance (which we have tried as much as we can).

Further consult services, group and organizations on-campus to help make Spark more accessible and fill gaps for first-years: This year we made sure all our activities were accessible for individual visually impaired and trained TLs in guided walking. Further, we had all our sessions documents made into student copies which were screen-reader friendly. I would suggest continuing this and consulting with SAS on session activities earlier on in the summer. I also would suggest having Adobe Pro on the Committee Room computer, so our Sessions Coordinators can make the screen-reader settings on their own, and so we can also do this to our training materials and more. The system worked well this year, but I think it may be easier if we could do it ourselves directly.

Check-in with Residence Life regarding the Residence Life Curriculum and schedule dates for the year: Throughout this summer I did meet with Sean Beaudette and go over the Residence Life curriculum with him. We also identified some potential times where Spark could come in a run workshops in the Residence Buildings. Unfortunately, both him and I got busy later in the summer due to Welcome Week and were unable to finish planning this. I would suggest the incoming PTM begin organizing this earlier in the summer, as booking these meetings can take some time. Residence Life was very positive and was on-board with the idea of Residence mini-sessions, so I think it still is a great opportunity for Spark, especially in second semester.

Book a venue for Spark Formal: We seriously enquired about 4 different formal venues and eventually decided on the Scottish Rites Club. Personally, I feel like it was the right decision as it is accessible, close to campus, beautiful and cheaper. They also seemed very interested in having a long-term relationship with Spark which could be beneficial for both parties. I would suggest making sure the waiting staff requirements are clearly outlined in advance, as we had a challenge with that, and also increase the number of dinner tables by at least 12. I'll speak more on Formal later on, but in terms of the Venue, I think Scottish Rites is great because it keeps the cost low for students and allow us to still keep costs low on our side without even having to completely sell-out.

Hire Team Leaders who are representative of the entire first-year cohort: This year, I worked with Connor and Steph to create a video targeting first-generation students and students in all faculties. I also reached out to the Welcome Week Faculty Planners and posted in all the faculty-specific Facebook groups. Our faculty representation definitely increased this year, although it still has room for improvement. Next year, I would suggest having TL Testimonials again (Sparked at Mac campaign) but highlighting each of the faculties directly this year. This year we offered an interview to: 9 from nursing, 7 from commerce, 7 from social sciences, 5 from engineering and 2 from humanities. In comparison to last year, we did not interview anyone from engineering or humanities, only 1 from commerce, 3 from social sciences and 1 from nursing. We ended up hiring 3 from nursing (last year 1), 2 from commerce (last year 1), 1 from engineering (last year none), 5 from social sciences (last year 1) and none from humanities (last year none).

Increase Spark's presence over the course of Welcome Week: With our events and tabling, we were easily able to have a strong presence at Welcome Week. Hiring the volunteer team earlier also allowed us to schedule everyone for tabling and events in advance. During the summer we also attended Horizons Successfest and hosted a Livestream Q&A for incoming students. This

had a lot of popularity and I would suggest offering a series of these in the summer as I think student would appreciate expanding it.

Create an exciting and welcoming atmosphere for the newly hired Spark Team Leaders: I think we were able to create a positive environment for our volunteers. During Welcome Week, it was nice to see volunteers connect and this year we used 'get to know you questions' to help us match co's. We also did co-wars during our first TL Meet n' Greet which was really fun!

Finalize digital campaigns/resources and revamp Spark's resource pillar: This year we switched away from guidebooks and instead used Instagram swipe-through photo campaigns. this received a lot of post engagement and I think were extremely successful and more cost-effective. I would recommend having a clearer schedule as to when which campaigns will happen through-out the year, but given this was a pilot year for this, I believe we did great. I would also continue with our 'Tips and Tricks' sections on our Instagram Stories, because those really allowed us to become a staple of support for first years even in the summer.

Register at least 224 (14 per group x 16 groups) students in the first term Spark weekly mentorship program: This year we registered 331 students in first semester, which is about a 142% increase from the year before. Consequently, we increased our session groups to 20 and offered our very first daytime sessions. The daytime sessions ran from 12pm-1:30pm and were super well attended. Next year, I would continue with offering more daytime sessions at this time. I would also suggest exploring the opportunity of yearlong sessions to help increase second semester retention. This has its logistical challenges, but I would be welcome to discussing this in further detail.

Receive feedback from Execs and regular team socials: I collected Exec feedback on my own earlier this year, which helped me adjust my methods of communication. I wish I had done more just Exec socials throughout the year as I think this was a missed opportunity.

Implement a 'Pre-Sessions Event': With our new Outreach & Engagement Coordinator position, we planned a Meet n' Greet between TLs and students the week before sessions begin. This helped decrease the gap between registration time and sessions beginning. This event was successful and held in Bridges. I would suggest hosting it again next year, however, I would start sessions 1 week earlier and move the Meet n' Greet up 1 week to further decrease this gap!

Send out Sponsorship Package: The implementation of sponsorship was super successful this year! We received over \$1300 in sponsorship, plus some extra event funding. I would highly recommend continuing this in the future!

Finalize the last 5 "Next Week on Spark" videos: We ended up changing the plan for these videos slightly, later in the summer. Instead of formal videos, we filmed a story during our weekly training sessions and posted them to our Instagram Close-Friends story. The Close-Friends list was just students registered for the mentorship program and these posts were "Next Week on Spark" styled and highlighted the fun activities we were going to do the upcoming the week in sessions to help increase retention! I would continue this in the future.

Begin 1-on-1 check-ins with all Spark Team Leaders: We did not end up doing mandatory 1-on-1 checks with volunteers again, similar to last year. However, I think they still could be beneficial and would suggest re-introducing them.

Open up Spark Ambassadors and solidify its structure: This year Spark Ambassadors had a slow start. I would suggest opening up Spark Ambassadors after the second week of sessions so the group can begin meeting in early October instead!

Effectively promote Spark Formal (ideally sell out all tickets): We sold over 220 tickets for Formal this year, which was great! I think our promotions were effective, but in retrospect, I wish we had started them earlier! I also would suggest trying to meet with FYC earlier about promotions. This year, some seemed hesitant to promote it and overall the group appeared less invested in the event than in the past. I would try to get them more involved in the process and more excited, as if they help with promotions directly it makes a huge difference in ticket sales! This year, we also were the first service to use the new Eventbrite ticketing system. The system itself is super user-friendly (especially when checking-in students at the door) and was really helpful! One thing I would check is if in the future, Compass can give access to event organizers to check ticket sales for the event on their own. Further, there is an added cost to tickets as both Compass and Eventbrite have mandatory fees which added up to over \$3 per ticket this year.

Send out first year student feedback survey: This was done for students in our Mentorship Program to help us improve them in the future. This year, the whole service was under review and just had our final report published. After speaking with the AVP Services, we also have data specifically from first-generation students, which I would love to see as that is a group of students I would like the service to continue catering support towards. After reading the report, I would again suggest exploring the possibility of yearlong sessions. I think this would greatly improve second semester retention and students year-after-year ask for it. Unfortunately, the logistics behind it would be very challenging, but I would love to speak on this further.

Host a holiday social to show volunteer appreciation: We had a 'Spark family dinner' again with Yankee Swap and a potluck. It was a lot of fun and very cozy! Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the team attended and we had a lot of fun, even when the power went out in BSB!

Collect Mid-Year transition reports from executive members: This year I forgot to actually collect these and just reminded Execs about their transition reports. I would suggest actually collecting these instead as it encourages Execs to fill them out as they go along.

Finalize the promotional plan for Term 2 Registration: I would suggest beginning this process in November instead of December next year.

FYC and Spark Ambassadors Event Collaboration: This did not happen this year as our Spark Ambassadors started too late and then it was difficult to collab with FYC. I think it's still a great idea and would suggest trying it again next year. Hopefully beginning Ambassadors earlier next year will help with this.

Register 200(+) students for second semester Spark: Unfortunately, I first semester success did not translate over to second semester sessions. More on this can be read in my previous EB Reports and also the Spark Review. I love the idea of shifting the emphasis of Spark in second semester more towards events and offering more of them, but I still think Sessions need to be offered. With no Sessions second semester, I believe we will not be fulfilling our mandate and also we risk severely negatively impacting the engagement of the volunteer team. I would highly recommend exploring the possibility of year-long sessions. I thought of doing it this year, but decided against it because of the logistics. I think it's very much possible, but it would unfortunately require a lot of logistical effort from the PTM and thus may need some support on this if they decide to do so.

Run a successful and motivating Winter Re-Training for Team Leaders: This year I had to take an unexpected medical leave which impacted re-training. I would suggest planning this further in advance next year and continue using this as an opportunity to discuss Elections procedures and expectations with volunteers.

Finalize Semester 2 of 'Next Week on Spark' videos: We continued with the Instagram Close-Friends stories into second semester. They're really great!

Get feedback from students, Team Leaders and Exec members: I am still in the process of receiving this feedback.

Help hire the new Spark Exec with the incoming PTM: The timeline of this has been adjusted as the new PTM was hired much later than I was last year and we also now need to conduct online interviews. I did set up Exec hiring online and the promotions in advance for the incoming PTM which has helped a lot!

Plan an Executive Retreat: Sadly, this was cancelled due to the global crisis. It was tentatively scheduled for the weekend of March 20th.

Host a thoughtful and enjoyable Volunteer Appreciation social: Our year-end social (along with all our second semester events and Closing Ceremonies) were all cancelled. We are still sending out digital 'TL Awards' to volunteers and have received the order of Spark sweaters. The sweaters will likely need to be picked up by volunteers in the summer/new school year as we have no way of shipping them to volunteers. Additionally, I am hoping to send online Uber Eats gift cards to all our volunteers and use our budget for the year-end event for this instead.

Ensure PTM is adequately transitioned (e.g. have transition report finished, meet with MSU Office staff and future partners they will need to work with, have multiple meetings to discuss the role): I am currently in the process of finishing my transition report and meeting with the incoming PTM. I had a really great transition last year, and I hope to replicate that this year! Unfortunately, there are the added challenges that it all must be online and we have far less time this year.

Re-evaluate Spark and propose any changes to schedules, budgets, roles etc. to SRA, MSU and incoming PTM: This year, I already submitted my proposed budget changes for Spark to the VP Finance. With the Spark Review, I also plan to discuss the future direction of Spark with the incoming PTM. If EB members have any suggestions for the service after reading our review report, I would love to hear them!

BUDGET

Here is my spending for Spark. I am also still waiting to receive \$1,546.59 back from WWSTAPC for our Welcome Week Events. This is reflected in the boxes highlighted in green on the budget.

SPARK				
EXPENDITURE				
ACCOUNT CODE	ITEM	BUDGET / COST	PO SUBMITTED (DATE)	PO APPROVED
5003-0125	SPARK - OFFICE SUPPLIES	60.00		
	\$20 Clubsfest table	\$20.00	August 19, 2019	126583
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$20.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$40.00		
6103-0125	SPARK - ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS	3,000.00		\$2,100.91
	SESSIONS - \$1460.00			\$1,104.86
	4x\$120 for Altitude Bonfire Pit - Invoice	\$480.00	June 26, 2019	PO006936
	Paint, Canvas and Paint Brushes - WWSTAPC (will be refunded after Welcome Week) - was \$266.77, but recieved larger refund?	\$184.55	July 26, 2019	126524
	Parking pass for therapy dogs (will be refunded by WWSTAPC after Welcome Week)	\$18.00	August 12, 2019	
	Parking passes for therapy dogs (will be refunded by WWSTAPC after Welcome Week) (2 x \$18)	\$36.00	August 20th, 2019	
	10 cheese pizzas + 7 pepperoni pizzas from Pizza Pizza - Pizza Paint Night - will be refunded by WWSTAPC	\$397.84	August 27th, 2019	126611
	Walmart - Puppies, Popsicles and Peers - 7 x Banana Popsicles, Cooler, storage bin - will be refunded by WWSTAPC	\$64.68	August 12, 2019	126569
	Walmart - Spark Sessions - 2 x rice bags, 5 x chip bags	\$12.32	August 12, 2019	126569
	Dollarama - Puppies, Popsicles and Peers - 5 x scissors - will be refunded by WWSTAPC	\$13.00	August 12, 2019	126569
	Dollarama - Pizza Paint Night - 3 x packages of plates, 8 x picture frames - will be refunded by WWSTAPC	\$29.49	August 12, 2019	126569
	Dollarama - Sessions - 27 x balloon packages, 7 x styrofoam balls, 7 x plastic spoon packages, 5 x pompom packages, 2 x manila envelope packages, 2 x toothpick package, 1 package envelopes, 6 x marshmallows	\$74.93	August 12, 2019	126569
	Dollarama - Sessions - 2 x pompoms, 2 x manila envelopes	\$5.71	August 12, 2019	126569
	Dollarama - Pizza Paint Night - 2 x kitchen funnels - will be refunded by WWSTAPC	\$2.88	August 12, 2019	126569
	Fortinos - Sessions - 1 x vegan marshmallows	\$7.90	August 12, 2019	126569
	Dollarama - Puppies, Popsicles and Peers - 4 x freezies - will be refunded by WWSTAPC	\$4.52	August 12, 2019	126569
	Complete RentAlls - Tables for Welcome Week events - 3 contracts combined (\$339 + \$351.43 + \$74.58) - will be refunded by WWSTAPC (was never charged?)	\$765.01	August 22nd, 2019	16632
	Shoppers - extra popsicles for Puppies, Popsicles and Peers - 7 x popsicles - will be refunded by WWSTAPC	\$30.62	August 28th, 2019	
	Fortinos - Sessions	\$31.83	August 31, 2019	
	\$20 per session group for Discover Your City (not all money used from original \$400)	\$343.15	September 30th, 2019	
	Printing from Underground for Metamorphosis Pamphlets (was			

Reimbursement
\$1,546.59 <-- WWSTAPC Owes
Revenue

