



REPORT

From the office of the...

Spark Coordinator

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Jimmy Long
SUBJECT: Spark Report 3
DATE: October 7, 2014

UPDATE

Spark is off to a very strong start as we enter our third week of sessions. Our students have been very engaged and have already begun to develop some fairly meaningful connections within the program. Preliminary feedback on the sessions has been very positive as well, while also identifying some changes we can make for the Winter Cycle to learn as much as we can from this Pilot process.

SERVICE USAGE

I was very pleased with the turnout we had for our Opening Ceremonies on September 22nd (given the absurd number of students that had overlapping classes) where we reached approximately 60-70% of our registrants in attendance. From there we have had fairly steady turnout week to week in our sessions with an average range of 5-9 students, as well as students already beginning to sign up for the Winter Cycle in term 2.

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

As was mentioned, we had our Opening Ceremonies on September 22nd which acted as an official kick-off to the program and gave students a better overview of what they'd signed up for. Overall response to this was very positive, even with a seemingly unlimited supply of technical difficulties. That week was also the launch of our sessions, with self-discovery, midterms/study habits, and 1/3 of the Discovering Your City sessions having happened at the time of this report's completion. I've also started collecting feedback from 2 groups every week to gauge how the sessions are going in terms of relevance, engagement, and transferability, and so far these responses have been very positive. Our Discvering Your City sessions in particular have been very exciting as we've had the opportunity to partner with SOCS, our first major collaboration. We also had our volunteer training weekend immediately after Welcome Week which was very valuable in terms of building a team dynamic. Our entire team is very bought in to the mission of Spark and is incredibly passionate about the program.

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

Moving forward, our next week's session is about stress management where we'll be collaborating with the Maroons, followed by Time Management, and then Wellness.

I am also looking forward to striking the Spark Advisory Committee in the near future (I'm 70% sure this is what it's called) to talk about how we want to evaluate the service for its renewal.

BUDGET

Budget Line	Amount Allocated	Percentage Spent	Amount Spent
Special Projects	\$2000.00	25%	\$500.00
Adv. & Promo	\$2000.00	37.5%	\$750.00
Leader Training	\$500.00	50%	\$250.00

Our budget has so far gone towards purchasing promotional materials for Welcome Day and Successfest, t-shirts for our volunteers, Welcome Week promo, all food and supplies needed for our training, and all sessions materials and opening ceremonies supplies so far.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

One recurring challenge that I've experienced is finding available room bookings that are satisfactory for running sessions. It's almost impossible to book the same MUSC room on a recurring basis, which has led to confusion for the first year groups placed in MUSC. IAHS has been working much better for ensuring recurring rooms, but we recently learned that they lock the building right at 10, often cutting sessions short. Moving forward, two options that would work better are 1) the MSU opening a new conference centre where Spark gets the first call on all rooms forever, or 2) booking out unused tutorial rooms, which after emailing several campus partners I'm still not sure how to do.

Another issue has been simply scheduling conflicts, with first years apparently having many more midterms during the week than I did back in the olden days (2011). While this is a bit of an inevitable problem, it has made it difficult to ensure the same groups of students can attend every week.

SUCCESES

As I mentioned, feedback to our sessions has been very positive so far, which is ultimately the most important success we can have. In terms of promotional success, our Facebook page is now at 615 likes with our twitter follower count currently at 136. While we're very happy with how successful this has been so far, we're also very excited to have another promo push leading up to our Winter Cycle. Our *Dear First Year Me* video was also met with very positive reviews (To quote my mom's texts: "WOW! I have no words!" before she promptly said a lot of positive words) with our view count just passing 3000 and almost 80 Facebook shares within 48 hours of its release.