

Sparky's Donations

Whether or not students decide to live on campus, they tend to not realize how big of an expense it can be. Arizona State may offer multiple scholarships to cover expenses such as tuition, meals, and dorms, but students often have to additionally rely on their own, or their family's, income to pay for necessities like clothes, furniture, electronics, and toiletries. Unfortunately, not many residents have a steady income to cover these expenses. However, with the introduction of "Sparky's Donations," a student-ran donation center where unwanted items in good condition can be reused by students who need them. Students with a lower income can take this opportunity to shop at a local, student-ran thrift shop and purchase the things they need that they may not have been able to afford before, for a fraction of the original cost.

To bring "Sparky's Donations" to life, we would first need an actual storefront to run our operations. We feel that Arizona State University offers many areas on campus that could be easily converted into a "Sparky's Donations" center. Alternatively, if there is no building available for a permanent storefront, a sort of mobile, booth-like setup could be deployed on a weekly basis and open and close at set times anywhere on campus. We would need to have enough space to be able to exhibit all items for purchase, as well as a storage area for items that have not yet been reviewed and priced, or sold. Regarding management and maintenance, the school could either hire student workers, or run on a volunteer basis which may even include incentives such as credits to students in fields like business, sustainability, marketing, or accounting. We'd hire students and supply the store with necessary tools like cash registers, price stickers, computers, and give students access to resources they may need so they can run the donation center. Cashiers are a need, but the center would also need other types of workers,

including but not limited to, people to examine and estimate the donated items, people to run audits and manage inventory, and potentially, a social media team to handle any marketing or customer service.

This project would have many lasting benefits. The most obvious being that it would be helping our fellow students who are in a tight financial situation, with over 80% of students a year receiving financial aid it is no secret we have large groups of students who could use the extra help, especially for our students who don't have family to make up for the lack of resources. Another benefit is a matter of pride and prestige for the university. ASU prides itself in being number one in innovation. A student organized, and student-run second hand store embodies the spirit of ingenuity and innovation that ASU is known for. A secondhand store for students is bound to become a practical solution for many universities, especially one's like ASU where we pride ourselves on being an inclusive and tight-knit community. This store has the potential of being expanded further to a larger customer base. The store can expand to an online platform, and students may have the opportunity to post and share a particular item they may no longer need. Other students or anyone in need could then reach out and inquire and become a potential customer. This also provides an opportunity to connect with students from the other ASU campuses, and create a larger network, further increasing the stock of items, the income being generated, and bringing all the campuses closer together. Students would be able to browse from the convenience of their phone to see if there are any items fitting to their needs. This could potentially increase the flow of income that could then be used to upgrade the store or be redistributed to the university to fund events, clubs and organizations, or upgrades to the campus. This solution is also eco-friendly. Many unwanted or old clothes, appliances, and other items that could be reused often end up in landfills and are damaging our environment. A quote from

ASU's news website states, "ASU now is in the forefront of sustainability, and officials want the university to remain there." If this claim is legitimate then Sparky's Donations is our next step in remaining the forefront of sustainability. Providing others with access to these items increases the likelihood of them being reused, and thus, reduce the amount of waste being generated by people, as well as companies because of less product demand leading to less resources and power that is used. This is an opportunity for students and faculty alike to be a part of something greater and give back to their community.

When it comes to the costs and expenses, we have made a rough over-estimate of what they could look like. This expense list is based on the assumption that students would be creating and working at the store in exchange for credits meaning they wouldn't have salaries. The website that we used as a template for the budget is from the website *cardconnect.com*. CardConnect is a payments platform of Fiserv. If you are unaware of Fiserv, they are a multinational Fortune 500 company that provides financial services for over 1.4 billion accounts globally. CardConnects purpose is helping businesses grow through seamless integration of secure payment processing. CardConnects secure payments for businesses like Adobe, and General Electrics, this means they have an abundant amount of experience on the financial side with successful businesses. This information led us to believe that their online budget maker for first year businesses would be accurate and that they would account for all the miscellaneous expenses an average person including us would not know due to inexperience in the field. To start off we would need a licence, permits, filing articles of incorporation, FEIN application fee, sales tax application fee, register domain name, and trademark, these all come out to a total of \$1000. State fees, accountining, book-keeping, insurance, and professional service fees, ended up coming out to \$1300. Market research, advertising, business cards, signage, logo creation, and

website design comes out to \$1450. It is important to keep in mind that the service expenses I just listed are many areas of interest for ASU students. Starting tools, supplies, telephone, website hosting, and credit card processing would be about \$2000. Rent (at \$1500 a month,) deposit, and POS system would come out to \$3000 for that first month. To find the total we took all the expenses and added the \$1500 multiplied by 12 to account for a year of rent. The total for the first year would be \$33,700. If we wanted to add on a permanent staff manager to oversee students and pay them 40,000 a year the total would end up being \$73,700. To make a total of \$80,000 that year which is only \$6000 profit we'd have to sell about \$6,600 a month which comes out to \$1,700 a week, or in other terms we'd have to sell over \$335 of merchandise a day in a 5 day week. This is a practical expectation to have for the first year based off a report back in 2018 from *BuisnessHowTo.com* who took the report from a survey done by the US Census Bureau (the pandemic has greatly sabotaged small businesses so we are showing you a 2018 report for more practical and realistic purposes,) but only 37% of small business reported sales under \$50,000. A second-hand store for students could be one of the smartest decisions made on campus. The secondhand retailer market has been rapidly expanding and will continue to expand and thrive as thrifting becomes more popular with the college age group, especially with a generation geared towards becoming increasingly eco-friendly. An article posted on Forbes regarding department store shares in the market stated, "off-price retailers will jump from being 10% in 2009 and 16% in 2019 to hit 19% in 2029. Direct-to-consumer sales, which were 8% in 2009 and 2019, will rise to 12% by 2029." As you can see the market for second-hand stores is expanding, and providing one right here on campus could be a great business opportunity for ASU. What would make Sparky's Donations more unique and draw in more customers than the average second-hand store is our location? With the store on campus, like-minded students are

bound to be shopping there and donating, meaning a higher probability for a greater turnover rate than an average retail store since it already hits the target group of young adults with no need of familiarization or desensitising to shopping at second-hand stores. ASU campus provides many stores that are useful to students and enables them to stay on campus more, this addition would be a fantastic contribution to our community.

In an attempt to gauge how students would perceive a second hand store at ASU, our team conducted a survey sent out to many ASU students of different ethnicities, and economic well-being. The results show an overwhelming support for a student-ran thrift store on campus. Based on our data we were able to draw several conclusions. Firstly, regarding the background of students' experiences with thrift stores of those who partook in the survey: 84 percent of them who took the survey stated that they have previously purchased a thrifted item. 95 percent of those who took the survey said that they would be open to purchasing second-hand items again. Of those who took the survey, 95 percent reported that they were an ASU student. When asked if a second hand store on ASU would be beneficial to them, 27 percent replied that it would be extremely beneficial, approximately 39 percent replied that it would be moderately beneficial, 25 percent replied that it would only be slightly beneficial to them, and less than 10 percent reported that it would not be beneficial to them at all. The results overall show that a local, student-ran thrift store would benefit the majority of the students on campus, that's approximately 65% of students surveyed who would at least moderately benefit. With all the walking traffic on campus, about 3 out of 5 students would check out the store and most likely wonder in. Finishing up the survey, 89 percent of those who responded stated that they would be willing to donate items, roughly 36 percent of those surveyed said they were willing to work at the store with another 34 percent would be willing to volunteer. With an overwhelming positive response from students,

ASU's promise of innovation and being eco friendly, mixed with the growing trends of the second-hand store market, Sparky's Donations might just be the perfect next step for ASU.

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