

Binghamton University
Ramah College Network
Summary of Survey Results

General Demographics

Sixteen Ramahniks at Binghamton University responded to this survey. The students have attended one or more of the following Ramah camps or programs: Berkshires, Canada, Darom, New England, Nyack, Poconos, Wisconsin, and Seminar.

The Search Process

The Impact of Ramah on the College Decision

Many Ramahniks at Binghamton didn't attend Ramah until after starting college, however they did note that their experiences at Ramah strengthened their commitment to the Jewish community at Binghamton.

Other Schools Considered

George Washington University, Boston University, New York University, Clarke University, SUNY Albany, SUNY Stony Brook, SUNY Buffalo, Indiana University, Northeastern University, Brandeis University, University of Maryland, University of Connecticut

Attributes Looked for in a School

Many students at Binghamton noted Jewish community as being a top priority when applying to schools. It was also important for many students to consider which major they may pursue in order to find a school with strong academics in their fields. A number of Ramahniks at Binghamton also noted that they looked for schools at which they could find kosher food easily.

Best Aspects of the School

Because Binghamton has such a large Jewish population, some students noted that the Jewish life, and the ease with which they were able to become friends with other Jews, is the best aspect of the school. Ramahniks also commented that Binghamton allows them to have a fun social life, while still being challenged in their academic work.

Jewish Life on Campus

Kosher Dining Options

There are a number of kashrut options at Binghamton, including a Kosher Kitchen, which is a separate kosher dining hall. In order to eat there, you must pay to be a member, or you can work there. One student explains other kashrut options at Binghamton: "On Friday night there are two options, both free: Hillel dinner and Chabad dinner. Lunch is available at Chabad and the Kosher Kitchen Saturday afternoon. You can also get dinner at the Kosher Kitchen everyday of the week at a certain time. Chabad has pizza dinner every Monday and Thursday night, and throughout the semester they have many programs where dinner is given. There are also two supermarkets with a frozen kosher

section, one having a larger choice of food.” Many students were unsatisfied with the Kosher Kitchen because it is expensive, and because its schedule does not always fit with the students’ schedules. However, as one student explained, “I am satisfied since they offer an array of choices and it is very social.”

Worship/Services

Ramahniks at Binghamton reported that a number of services are offered: Conservative, Orthodox, Reform, and Chabad. The students’ comments were mixed when it came to their satisfaction with worship options. Some students were happy with services, noting that “there are a lot of options so it’s nice,” and “I love all the services that Chabad has to offer.” Others indicated that the services, particularly the Conservative services, were lacking: “As a student who prefers to attend Conservative services, at times I am not satisfied because it is difficult to get a minyan on Shabbat morning. For this reason I attend the nearby Conservative synagogue which is very welcoming.” However, another student wrote that the Conservative minyan is steadily gaining strength.

Jewish Studies

Binghamton University offers a strong Judaic Studies department. Nearly all of the Ramahniks responded enthusiastically about its Hebrew course offerings. Students also noted Jewish history classes as being particularly interesting. For informal Jewish learning, a number of students recommended attending classes with the Chabad Rabbi and his wife.

Jewish Social Life

One student summed up Jewish social life at Binghamton with the statement, saying that there is “always something to do with a Jewish undertone.” Most students noted that Hillel and Chabad are the main sources for Jewish social life, as well as the Jewish Heritage Project and Jewish fraternities and sororities. Beyond these organizations, one student commented that “there are also strictly social Jewish organizations that have parties, raise money for charity, and have events for the holidays.” Another student wrote that “about 33% of the school is Jewish,” so there is a “large, active, tight-knit community.”

Hillel Activities

Hillel at Binghamton University offers a number of programs: services, social programs, Israel programming, social action, Shabbat dinners, study opportunities. Additionally, Hillel holds Shabbat dinner every week: “They hold Shabbat dinner on campus in the union so it’s really easy to get to. I go mostly every Friday night and our Shabbat table is filled with everyone I know from camp. It’s a lot of fun and we have a good time just catching up. It feels a bit like camp!” Students did note that because Chabad is also a “major center for Jewish life on campus,” the two organizations are often in competition. “Hillel is rather small, but growing,” with “good programming and involvement.” Of the Ramahniks who responded to this survey, one student held a leadership position in both Hillel and KOACH, one more student held a leadership in Hillel, and almost half have attended KOACH programming.

Other Options for Jewish Social Life

Chabad is a strong organization at Binghamton. For other options, Ramahniks noted the Jewish Heritage Project and the Jewish Student Network. The Kosher Kitchen is another place to go to hang out with other Jews.

Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Activity on Campus

Most students indicated that they hadn't seen any acts of anti-Semitism first-hand, but it could still exist on campus. One student wrote that a student spray painted antisemitic phrases on a dorm wall. Every respondent wrote that anti-Israel sentiment exists at Binghamton University, including anti-Israel graffiti and speakers.

Ramahniks' Advice to Prospective Students

Ramahniks at Binghamton University encourage prospective students to visit to truly get to know the school. Don't base your decision on rumors—see for yourself!

“Look into everything. This school has a lot to offer and there is always someone here you know. It makes it a comfortable environment.”

“If you are looking for a school with a thriving Jewish population then this is the school for you.”

“If you're a New York resident, Binghamton is the best value for your money. If you're not a New York resident, go because it's fun.”

“Come visit and see if you like it. Ask a lot of questions that pertain to you and your perfect school and see if Bing's accommodating.”

To receive contact information for Ramahniks at Binghamton (or another college on the Ramah College Network), please email Alana Tilman at ramahdesk@campramah.org. Please include your name, your Ramah affiliation, and the college(s) for which you would like contact information.

This summary was updated in March 2009. For more up-to-date information about the Jewish community at Binghamton, contact the Binghamton Hillel.