

Boston University
Ramah College Network
Summary of Survey Results

General Demographics

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

The Search Process

The Impact of Ramah on the College Decision

Many of the Ramahniks who responded to this survey indicated that their experiences at Ramah impacted their decision to attend Boston University. Most of the respondents wrote that finding a school with a strong, Jewish community similar to Ramah's was a priority. "I wanted to go somewhere with an active Jewish community, so I could at least maintain a small taste of the Ramah community during the year."

Other Schools Considered

Tufts University, University of Michigan, New York University, University of Maryland, Indiana University, Binghamton University, Emerson College, University of Iowa

Attributes Looked for in a School

Some Ramahniks were looking for Jewish life that included a shomer Shabbat community and a strong Hillel. Academics, including specific majors, and an urban environment were also considered.

Best Aspects of the School

Many of the Ramahniks responded that being in the heart of Boston is BU's best aspect: "I really love the fact that it's in a city, especially Boston. There are a lot of opportunities here to explore the city. I go to museums, malls, shows and lots of other things. I also love Boston because I have so many friends at schools in other areas." Because Boston University is such a large school, there is "a myriad of social/intellectual opportunities for students." The university's many schools offer a wide range of classes, so every student can find an area of interest.

Jewish Life on Campus

Kosher Dining Options

One student explained that "there is a kosher dining hall in the Hillel house, which opens for dinner and lunch every day and operates on Shabbos too; it is always possible for students to have a kosher meal." There is a kosher meal plan, however you can also use the regular meal plan to pay for kosher meals at Hillel. There are also some kosher restaurants nearby. Students are generally happy with the kosher dining options, saying that the food is relatively good and that eating meals in Hillel is convenient.

Worship/Services

A variety of service options are available at Boston University, including Conservative, Orthodox, Reform, and Chabad. Additionally, sometimes there is a Sephardi minyan at Hillel. Students estimate that 150-200 students attend services on Friday night, and 50-60 students attend on Shabbat day. Students enjoy services at Boston University. One student wrote: "I feel comfortable at the them and I think they are very spiritual." Some students were dissatisfied at times with the Conservative minyan, saying that "the singing is sometimes not up to par with the beauty of Ramah services," however another student wrote that "the Conservative service has a wonderful community of USYers and Ramahniks."

Jewish Studies

Ramahniks at BU recommend taking a course with Elie Weisel ("his classes are really great, but you need to apply and get accepted"), as well as Hebrew language classes. Other recommended courses are Mysticism in Judaism, Holocaust Literature and Film, and Introduction to the Bible.

Jewish Social Life

Ramahniks who responded to this survey described the BU Jewish social life as "vibrant" and "active." Students indicated that Hillel is the main source of Jewish social life, especially on Shabbat.

Hillel Activities

Hillel offers a wide range of activities, including religious services, social programs, Israel programming, study opportunities, and social action (tzedek) opportunities. One student wrote about Hillel: "We have a brand new building. It offers educational opportunities, three types of services on Shabbas, a daily minyan, at least one social program a week, kosher dining, a hang out area with ping pong, pool tables, and big TVs, and a study lounge too. It's a wonderful place to learn, pray, or just hang out. There's a student board, two Rabbis, and an adult board that are always listening to our input. Its a place that is continually improving."

Other Options for Jewish Social Life

Many students wrote that because Hillel offers so many outlets for Jewish social life, they do not look elsewhere. However some students participate in Chabad activities, and one student mentioned that local synagogues and other universities provide opportunities for Jewish social life.

Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Activity on Campus

All of the Ramahniks who responded to this survey wrote that they have never personally experienced antisemitism at Boston University. Most of the students have witnessed little anti-Israel activity on campus. One student wrote that when a TA made an anti-Israel remark in class, the student and others stood up for Israel. Some students wrote that there are some pro-Palestinian groups on campus that hold rallies.

Ramahniks' Advice to Prospective Students

Ramahniks at BU strongly encourage prospective students to visit the campus and to stop by the Hillel to get a feel for Boston University's great Jewish community!

"BU is not as big a school as it seems; there is a strong close-knit Jewish community here that will make it seem a lot more inviting and welcoming. If you come to visit BU, you should look at the Hillel."

"Definitely take a tour, and make sure you stop by Hillel because they will be very welcoming."

"Come check out the Hillel, it's what sold me on BU. Also, make sure you stay with someone you're already friends with if possible, because then you can see the side of the university that you can't otherwise experience. A simple tour by a tour guide won't really give you a feel for what things are like here--they kind of just point out buildings."

To receive contact information for Ramahniks at Boston University (or another college on the Ramah College Network), please email Shana Zions at ramahdesk@jtsa.edu. Please include your name, your Ramah affiliation, and the college(s) for which you would like contact information.