

Indiana University, Bloomington
Ramah College Network
Summary of Survey Results

General Demographics

Thirteen Ramahniks from Indiana University responded to the survey. These students have attended at least one of the following Ramah camps or programs: California, Canada, Darom, New England, Nyack, Wisconsin, and Seminar.

The Search Process

The Impact of Ramah on the College Decision

Many students felt that the tight-knit Jewish community at Ramah inspired them to look for a college with a similar Jewish community. At Indiana they found that the Hillel provided this type of community: "I also knew that I would be involved in Hillel and wanted it to be active and full of Ramah type spirit and love for Judaism!"

Other Schools Considered

Ohio State, University of Illinois, Goucher College, Michigan State University, University of Michigan, UC Irvine, Hofstra University, Kent State University, Brandeis University, University of Maryland, University of Missouri, Howard University, Kansas University, Purdue University, University of Wisconsin, University of Arizona

Attributes Looked for in a School

Most students liked that Indiana was a big enough school to offer them a wide variety of courses, especially in the Judaic Studies department. Some students also commented on the beauty of the campus. Many students also noted that Indiana's large size allows for students to become involved in diverse activities, beyond just Hillel.

Best Aspects of the School

The size of the community was noted as one of the best aspects of Indiana. Although it is a large school, one student noted, "there are so many ways to make it feel small. I've truly been able to find people here that are looking for the same things that I am. It truly allows you to realize how much you want each aspect of your life to affect you." Another student felt that Indiana's academic offerings were one of the best aspects of the school: "I love that my school is surrounded by the arts and very concentrated in that area. Because I am studying Music Education and Judaic Studies I wanted to be somewhere where I knew the music was amazing and the Jewish life recognized. Indiana University has the best music school in the world and one of the biggest Judaic Studies programs as well as one of the best Hillels."

Jewish Life on Campus

Kosher Dining Options

The Hillel at Indiana University offers three kosher meals per week (Monday is dairy, and Tuesday and Wednesday are meat). You can use your meal points for these meals.

Hillel also serves a free Shabbat dinner every week. Additionally, students can come to Hillel and take leftovers from the refrigerator. Chabad and Aish also provide free Shabbat meals. Students say that while the Hillel meals are delicious, they wish there were more options for people who don't live close to the Hillel building.

Worship/Services

Students reported that all types of services are offered at Indiana. Hillel offers Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox services. Friday night services are held every week at Hillel. In the past, there have been students who have organized a monthly Shabbat morning minyan. This minyan could be revived in the future, but there are currently no Shabbat morning services. Chabad also has services every Friday night. Aish has services some Friday nights and some Shabbat mornings, but not regularly. Some students expressed frustration with the services that were held at Hillel, however others felt that Friday night services were welcoming, similar to camp, and full of ruach. One student noted that the synagogue in Bloomington is also very welcoming to students.

Jewish Studies

Students were incredibly enthusiastic about the Judaic Studies program offered at Indiana University, feeling strongly that it is one of the best and fastest-growing in the country. They recommended taking classes from a number of professors, including Stephen Katz, Jeffrey Veidlinger, Dov-Ber Kerler, Judah Cohen, and Michael Morgan.

Jewish Social Life

Most students noted that the two main sources of Jewish social life are the Hillel and Jewish sororities and fraternities. One student explained, "Hillel offers a number of social programs each week. A couple highlights include free bagels at a local bagel shop and JHOP (Jewish House of Pancakes)." Another student pointed out that there are 3 Jewish fraternities and 2 Jewish sororities, although despite their Jewish affiliation they rarely, if ever, sponsor Jewish-related social events. Finally, a student explained Jewish social life at Indiana like this: "Generally, depending on what kind of Jewish life you want, you can create it."

Hillel Activities

Hillel at Indiana sponsors a number of events, including social programs, religious services, Israel programming, and social action programming. Some students said that Hillel is "a very warm, inviting, wonderful place to be," and "it's really very easy to walk in the door anytime of the day because you're always greeted by a staff member or a familiar face." Other students felt that the environment can feel somewhat cliquey, but with patience everyone finds a place. One student explained that "Hillel is primarily a student led organization which gives those leading the organization a lot of say as to what is going on. We have an executive board consisting of eight students and a general board made up of close to 40 involved students in charge of diverse programming." Four of the Ramahniks who responded to the survey reported that they have held a leadership position in Hillel. According to the respondents, there is no KOACH programming at Indiana.

Other Options for Jewish Social Life

The Jewish Studies Association holds events throughout the year, and some students turn to Chabad and/or Aish for a different type of social programming. Students note that certain groups of friends hold onegs and other informal activities at their apartments and houses, to which other Jewish students are invited.

Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Activity on Campus

Students generally felt safe as Jews at Indiana University. A couple of students described an incident in which swastikas were drawn on white boards in dorms where Jews typically live, although this seemed to be an isolated event. Students did express that there is not a lot of knowledge of Judaism on campus; one student said that coming from Los Angeles to the Midwest, she was surprised that some people had never met a Jew before. Another student expressed surprise that an exam was scheduled for Yom Kippur. There is a generally pro-Israel sentiment on campus. There are no major anti-Israel rallies or protests and there is at least one large-scale pro-Israel event each year.

Ramahniks' Advice to Prospective Students

Ramahniks at Indiana University enjoy the perks of being at large university while finding ways to create a small community. They encourage prospective students to get involved and make a home for themselves at Indiana.

“Keep an open mind when visiting; yes, it is a big campus, but it shrinks by a million times once you get familiar with the campus.”

“Come visit, call Hillel, and have them set you up with a freshman to spend the night in the dorms with them. You'll meet tons of people who will tell you what they've made of their college experience, and will act as very supportive guides if/when you choose to attend IU.”

“Having a big Jewish community is great, but it's also easy to get lost in the crowd. So, if you want to stand out, be sure to get involved right away. It's scary at first, but it's great practice for the real world, and you'll meet some great people while doing it, learn a ton, and have lots of fun.”

“Indiana is a genuine big Midwestern state school. There is someone and something for everyone here.”

To receive contact information for Ramahniks at Indiana University (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.

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