

**Rutgers University,  
The State University of New Jersey**  
Ramah College Network  
Summary of Survey Results

General Demographics

Ten Ramahniks from Rutgers University responded to the survey. These students have attended at least one of the following Ramah camps or programs: Berkshires, Darom, Nyack, Poconos, and Seminar.

**The Search Process**

The Impact of Ramah on the College Decision

Many Ramahniks at Rutgers indicated that their experiences at Ramah influenced their college decision. One student wrote, “I knew that I wanted to have easy access to my close friends, and a large, vibrant Hillel with an observant Jewish community was a must.” Another student said that Ramah was an influence in that “it increased my desire to be Jewishly active on campus and it allowed me to pursue increasing Jewish religious observance.”

Other Schools Considered

University of Pennsylvania, Cornell University, New York University, Brandeis University, University of Pittsburgh, University of Maryland, Tufts University, University of Michigan, Pennsylvania State University, SUNY Albany, SUNY Stony Brook, University of Delaware

Attributes Looked for in a School

Students were looking for a school with a good location and a large Jewish community. Both academics and athletics were also important factors in students’ decisions.

Best Aspects of the School

Academics were noted by most students as being one of Rutgers’ best aspects: “It is extremely important to me to feel like I’m learning what I want to learn, and I definitely feel that at Rutgers. The academic programs here are fabulous.” Ramahniks also felt that the vibrant Jewish community, the great location (between New York City and Philadelphia), and the variety of extracurricular options are reasons to love Rutgers.

**Jewish Life on Campus**

Kosher Dining Options

The Chabad House offers a kosher meal plan, and some of the regular dining halls offer limited kosher options by request. There are many kosher restaurants close to campus (a short walk from the College Ave campus to Highland Park). Students’ reviews of the kosher options were mixed; many do not feel comfortable at Chabad and would prefer if Hillel offered a kosher meal plan. One student commented: “I think each separate campus

could offer more kosher products, but it's great that my school even thought of kashrut at all.”

### Worship/Services

There are a number of service options at Rutgers: Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox. Students estimate that more than 150 students attend services on Friday night, and between 80 and 100 students attend on Shabbat morning. Most students are very satisfied with the services offered, saying that there is an option for everyone. The Conservative minyan has services both on Friday night and Shabbat morning. One student noted that “it would be nice to have an egalitarian service for Mincha/Ma'ariv on Saturday nights,” and another student wrote that “there are many denominations represented, but it would be nice to have more people involved in non-Orthodox communities.”

### Jewish Studies

Ramahniks were very happy with the Jewish Studies program at Rutgers. One student explained, “There are too many classes to recommend. There is a HUGE variety and the Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life and the Jewish Studies Department work together to create extensive course offerings every semester.” Recommended courses include “Remembering the Shtetl,” “Jewish Society and Culture,” “Sociology of Jewish Religious Movements,” “Jewish Women and Law,” “Jewish Graphic Novel,” “American Jewish History” and any Hebrew class. The Bildner Center every fall holds a Jewish Film Festival.

### Jewish Social Life

Ramahniks described the Jewish social life at Rutgers as “vibrant,” “active,” and “prominent.” One student wrote: “There are Jewish fraternities and sororities as well as Hillel and Chabad, and some other inter-religious student groups. There are many ways to be involved Jewishly if you want to be. There are parties, dances, Israel events, educational events, etc. for Jewish students. If you want something that doesn't exist, you can make it happen!”

### Hillel Activities

Hillel at Rutgers University sponsors events and activities regularly, including services, social programs, Israel programming, study opportunities, and social action (tzedeck) opportunities, and A Cappella (Kol Halayla). One student explained: “It is very vibrant with MANY programs throughout the week, every week. The community is warm and welcoming with a very approachable staff... It is a great place that facilitates Jewish students doing Jewish things with other Jews.” Another student says that Hillel is very welcoming, and has a “very intimate atmosphere. There are always familiar faces when I walk in and yet always new people to meet.” Two of the Ramahniks who responded to this survey have held leadership positions in both Hillel and KOACH. Nearly all of the respondents have attended KOACH programming at Rutgers.

### Other Options for Jewish Social Life

Chabad was noted as the top place for Jewish social life other than Hillel. Additionally, some Ramahniks said that Greek life and the Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life,

offer Jewish social alternatives to Hillel. Many Ramahniks said that groups of friends often keep kosher homes off campus where they host Shabbat meals or socialize after Hillel Shabbat dinners.

### Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Activity on Campus

No Ramahniks reported witnessing antisemitism on campus; one student noted: “I wear a kippah every day and have not ever had a problem.” Students wrote that anti-Israel activity is present on campus but not pervasive. One student wrote: “I once saw a sign that read 'your tuition is paying for genocide in Palestine,' and occasionally I will see tables with pro-Palestinian people handing out information.” Rutgers Hillel is the only Hillel to date with a Center for Israel Engagement with two full time staff members working on Israel programming on campus.

### **Ramahniks’ Advice to Prospective Students**

Ramahniks encourage prospective students to visit the campus (and stop by the Hillel) to get a feel for what it’s like to be a student at Rutgers University. As a student at Rutgers, take advantage of everything it has to offer, and don’t be overwhelmed by the school’s size.

“Take a bus tour of the school and a walking tour of College Ave. Make sure to come into Hillel and speak with a staff member or any students in the building. At a later time, make sure to spend a night or a weekend at Rutgers to get a feel for campus life. We also have Prospective Student Shabbatons in February, which are great because you and other prospective students can hang out and learn about the school together.”

“Speak to upper classmen. Find a contact in the Hillel community to help you find a voice. Go to meetings/events that interested you and just talk to people. Take at least one Jewish studies class. Consider eating at Chabad to meet more Jews and for kashrut purposes. Don't let the different campuses/bus system turn you off.”

“Come and visit and be prepared to deal with the issues that come along with attending a large university.”

“Appreciate the social life!”

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

Updated December 2012