

University of Western Ontario
Ramah College Network
Summary of Survey Results

General Demographics

Eight Ramahniks at the University of Western Ontario responded to the survey. The students have all attended Camp Ramah in Canada, and some have attended Seminar.

The Search Process

The Impact of Ramah on the College Decision

Almost all of the Ramahniks who responded to this survey said that Ramah had a strong influence on their decision to attend Western. One student wrote: "Going to camp allowed me to make friends and live in a Jewish community that I felt comfortable in. With that in mind, I chose to go to the University of Western Ontario because the community here catered to my needs in providing a strong Jewish support group, as well as having a strong contingency of Ramahniks."

Other Schools Considered

McGill University, University of Toronto, York University, Dalhousie University
Queen's University

Attributes Looked for in a School

Students looked for a school with strong and varied academic options and a large Jewish community. Location was also a key factor: "somewhere not so far from home but not so close either."

Best Aspects of the School

The University of Western Ontario offers "a great social life, an excellent Jewish student community, and great academia," according to one student. Another student also wrote that the "helpful professors and amazing guidance program" are part of the great academics at Western.

Jewish Life on Campus

Kosher Dining Options

The Chabad House has Shabbat dinner every Friday night, but otherwise there are no kosher dining options: "strictly kosher students cannot eat on campus at all." This is usually not an issue because most students live off-campus, with their own kosher kitchens, and the local grocery stores carry kosher food.

Worship/Services

Chabad holds Shabbat services every week, with around 100 students in attendance on Friday night and around 20 students in attendance on Shabbat morning. Reviews of the services were mixed, with some students enjoying Chabad's welcoming atmosphere, and other students wishing for more options. One student wrote: "I would love if more

students came on Saturday morning. As for Kabbalat Shabbat, it is no Ramah experience with the amazing singing and ruach, but I guess it will do for now.” One student commented that because of the limited service options, it is “more difficult to maintain a religious observance.”

Jewish Studies

Most of the Ramahniks who responded to this survey have not taken Jewish Studies courses, however those who have recommend the following courses: Holocaust studies, Jewish History, Talmud classes, and classes about Jewish culture.

Jewish Social Life

One student explained Jewish social life at Western like this: “There are very prevalent Jewish groups on campus such as Hillel and Israel On Campus, as well as Jewish frats. And there is a main geographical area where the Jewish students live in downtown London that helps Jews meet one another. Also, the Chabad house we have here helps Jews socialize and come together for a great Shabbat meal, and most people from different backgrounds and social groups can meet there.”

Hillel Activities

According to the Ramahniks who responded to this survey, the Hillel at the University of Western Ontario offers religious services (including holiday celebrations), social programs, Israel programming, and social action (tzedek) opportunities. Students describe Hillel as “active,” “a great place to hang out,” and “great for fun times.” Another student proudly wrote: “Hillel is obviously fantastic at Western, considering the chain of command stems from Ramah itself—the leader and student presidents are all Ramahniks.” Four of the Ramahniks who responded to this survey have served in leadership positions at Hillel.

Other Options for Jewish Social Life

In addition to Hillel, fraternity parties and other social gatherings are often a way to socialize with other Jewish students. Chabad is very popular at Western, so many Jewish students also socialize there. Additionally, there is an Israel advocacy group called Israel On Campus.

Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Activity on Campus

The Ramahniks who responded to this survey indicated that they have never personally encountered antisemitism. However, all of the students indicated that there is anti-Israel activity on campus, although it has declined in recent years.

Ramahniks’ Advice to Prospective Students

Ramahniks at the University of Western Ontario encourage prospective students who are looking for a great Jewish community and strong academics to look into Western.

“This is an excellent place for a Jewish student to have the best 4+ years of their life as it provides excellent social opportunities as well as excellent academics opportunities, as well as many in general extra curricular activities.”

“Come with an open mind, university is different than high school in a good way!”

“Get involved!”

To receive contact information for Ramahniks at the University of Western Ontario (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.