

American University

Washington, DC • Private School



The most comprehensive guide to free speech on campus — anywhere

Because a true university education requires freedom of expression.

The College Free Speech Rankings are based on student surveys, campus policies, and recent speech-related controversies.

OVERALL RANK

118 ▲

/257

▲ 119 FROM 2024

GRADE

F

— F FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

0

— 0 FROM 2025

Overview

American University ranks 118 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 58, holding on to an F speech climate grade and a “yellow light” Spotlight rating.

American places in the bottom 25 for “Self-Censorship” and in the bottom 50 for “Political Tolerance,” indicating that many silence themselves and hesitate to host controversial speakers. The university’s adoption of the Chicago Statement offers a solid foundation, but broader cultural change has yet to take root.

American could build on recent momentum by revising its written speech policies to earn a “green light” Spotlight rating and by adopting an official commitment to institutional neutrality.

Spotlight Rating

Yellow

FIRE’s Spotlight database annually rates regulations on student expression based on the extent to which they restrict free speech.

If you are a school administrator and would like to discuss your rating, reach out to speechcodes@thefire.org.

Visit our website: <https://rankings.thefire.org/> for more information.

HIGHLIGHTS



52% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



77% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



32% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

5.45:1

There are roughly 5.45 liberal students for every one conservative student.

Institutional Neutrality

NOT ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D

▲ INCREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C

▼ DECREASE

OPENNESS

C-

▲ INCREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

F

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▲ INCREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

O

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

O

DEPLATFORMINGS

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