

Kent State University

Kent, OH • Public 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

196 ▼

/257

▼ -152 FROM 2024

GRADE

F

— F FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

1

— 1 FROM 2025

Overview

Kent State University ranks 196 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 54, down more than 150 places from last year — a slide accelerated by a change in student perception and a three-point penalty after administrators removed a student art display that depicted political violence.

Kent State remains in the top 50 for “Administrative Support.” The school ranks in the bottom 50 for “Self-Censorship,” and tumbled from the top 25 last year to the bottom quartile for “Comfort” this year. Its “yellow light” Spotlight rating indicates several written policies still restrict speech.

Kent State could regain ground by revising those policies to earn a “green light” Spotlight rating as well as formally adopting both the Chicago Statement and 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



46% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



67% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



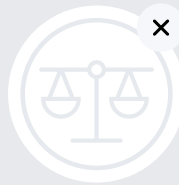
35% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

1.2:1

There are roughly 1.20 conservative students for every one liberal student.

Institutional Neutrality

NOT ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

NOT ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D-

▼ DECREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

D+

▼ DECREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

F

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

D-

▼ DECREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▲ INCREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

DEPLATFORMINGS

1