

Pennsylvania State University

University Park, PA • 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

109 ▲

/257

▲ 119 FROM 2024

GRADE

F

— F FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

1

0 FROM 2025

Overview

Pennsylvania State University ranks 109 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 58. The Nittany Lions leapt 119 places from last year's 228 as Penn State stopped adding speech controversy penalties, yet it still earns a "yellow light" Spotlight rating.

Student perceptions place Penn State in the top 10 for "Political Tolerance" and in the top 50 for perceived "Administrative Support," suggesting a campus willing to host speakers across the political spectrum at a greater rate than other campuses — and an administration viewed as somewhat supportive.

Penn State could make decisive progress by revising its speech codes to earn a "green light" Spotlight rating and by publicly adopting the Chicago Statement and an official commitment to institutional neutrality to affirm free expression.

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



44% 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.



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

1.19:1

There are roughly 1.19 liberal students for every one conservative student.

Institutional Neutrality

NOT ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

NOT ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D

▼ DECREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C+

▼ DECREASE

OPENNESS

C-

▲ INCREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

F

▲ INCREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

D-

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▲ INCREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

DEPLATFORMINGS

1