

Virginia Commonwealth University

Richmond, VA • 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

79 ▼

/257

▼ -47 FROM 2024

GRADE

D -

▼ D FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

2

1 FROM 2025

Overview

Virginia Commonwealth University ranks 79 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 60, earning a D-speech climate grade. The university dropped 47 places from last year, a slide that coincided with a 2025 incident in which administrators withheld degrees from pro-Palestine protesters — an action that carried a formal rankings penalty.

Student perceptions place VCU in the bottom 25 for both “Administrative Support” and “Disruptive Conduct,” signaling distrust in how officials handle controversial events and a high tolerance for shutting down speech. The school also ranks in the bottom 50 for “Political Tolerance.” Its lone bright spot is a “green light” Spotlight rating, showing that written policies are comparatively strong but not yet matched by campus practice.

VCU could regain ground by adopting the Chicago Statement and an official commitment to institutional neutrality.

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.

Spotlight Rating

Green



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

HIGHLIGHTS



50% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



85% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



50% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

6.65:1

There are roughly 6.65 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

D+

▼ DECREASE

OPENNESS

C

▲ INCREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D-

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▼ DECREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

1

DEPLATFORMINGS

1