

University of Washington

Seattle, WA • 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

254 
/257

▼ -28 FROM 2024

GRADE

F

— F FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

3

1 FROM 2025

Overview

University of Washington ranks 254 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings, earning a score of 44 and an F speech climate grade. UW dropped 28 places from last year, a slide that coincided with a major event disruption in which protesters pulled a fire alarm to halt a Turning Point USA talk — an incident that triggered a 3-point penalty. The school also earns a “red light” Spotlight rating, pulling its overall score even lower.

Student perceptions record one bright spot: UW places in the top 50 for “Self-Censorship,” indicating comparatively fewer feel compelled to stay silent. That optimism fades elsewhere, as the campus ranks in the bottom 25 for “Disruptive Conduct” and the bottom 50 for “Comfort Expressing Ideas,” underscoring persistent hostility to open dialogue.

UW could begin to reverse course by overhauling restrictive speech codes to earn a “green light” Spotlight rating, adopting the Chicago Statement and an official commitment to institutional neutrality, and enforcing clear penalties for protests that shut down invited speakers.

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

Red



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

HIGHLIGHTS

37

37% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.

80

80% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

42

42% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

5.06 : 1

There are roughly 5.06 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 -

▲ INCREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C

▼ DECREASE

OPENNESS

C

▲ INCREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D

▲ INCREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▼ DECREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

DEPLATFORMINGS

3