



Virginia

7 schools ranked



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.

AVERAGE RANK

58 
/257

 23 FROM 2024

AVERAGE GRADE

D

 DECREASED

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

5

— 3 FROM 2025

Overview

Seven Virginia schools are ranked in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings. The state's average speech-climate grade is D, compared to a national average of F.

The University of Virginia ranks 21 overall and is the top-ranked school in the state. It holds a “green light” rating in FIRE’s Spotlight database, meaning its written policies do not seriously threaten student expression. UVA’s Board of Visitors has adopted the pro-free speech Chicago Statement. UVA is also the only school in the state that has adopted a statement on institutional neutrality.

George Mason University and William & Mary rank 26 and 33, respectively. Both hold “green light” ratings and have not adopted a statement of institutional neutrality - while GMU has adopted the Chicago Statement. Virginia Tech and Washington & Lee University have adopted the Chicago Statement but maintain “yellow light” policies that threaten student expression. James Madison University and the University of Richmond also hold “yellow light” ratings and have not adopted major free speech statements.

Clarifying written policies and strengthening institutional commitments would help improve free-speech climates across Virginia campuses.

If you have questions, reach out to fire@thefire.org or visit us at <https://rankings.thefire.org/>.

HIGHLIGHTS



43% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



76% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



36% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

2.46:1

Across Virginia, there are roughly 2.46 liberal students for every one conservative student.

SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D

— NO CHANGE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C

▼ DECREASED

OPENNESS

C-

▲ INCREASED

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D-

▼ DECREASED

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▼ DECREASED

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASED

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

1

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

2

DEPLATFORMINGS

2

HONOR ROLL STATEMENTS

0

ATTEMPTED DISRUPTIONS

0

NEW IN 2025

3