

Howard University

Washington, DC • Private 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

246 ▲

/257

▲ -10 FROM 2024

GRADE

F

— F FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

1

0 FROM 2025

Overview

Howard University ranks 246 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 49, an F speech climate grade. The university still earns a “red light” Spotlight rating and has not adopted either the Chicago Statement or an official commitment to institutional neutrality, leaving key policy obstacles in place.

Despite these structural shortcomings, Howard places in the top 25 for both “Comfort Expressing Ideas” and “Openness,” suggesting many students feel at ease sharing their views. But the school ranks in the bottom 25 for “Political Tolerance” and in the bottom 50 for “Disruptive Conduct,” indicating a campus climate where dissenting speakers face hostility and events risk interruption.

Howard could strengthen its free speech culture by revising restrictive speech policies to earn a “green light” or at least a “yellow light” Spotlight rating, as well as 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

Red



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

HIGHLIGHTS



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



74% 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.

13.39:1

There are roughly 13.39 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

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

B-

▲ INCREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D-

▲ INCREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▲ INCREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

DEPLATFORMINGS

1