

Illinois State University

Normal, IL • 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

180 ▼

/257

▼ -80 FROM 2024

GRADE

F

— F FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

0

— 0 FROM 2025

Overview

Illinois State University ranks 180 out of 257 in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings, with a score of 56, an F speech climate grade. The university earns a “yellow light” Spotlight rating, indicating that several written student policies still restrict expression.

Student perceptions place ISU in the bottom 25 on both “Self-Censorship” and “Disruptive Conduct” and in the bottom 50 for “Comfort Expressing Ideas.” No metric reaches the top 50, underscoring a campus where many students hesitate to speak while a vocal minority endorses obstructive protest tactics.

ISU could improve by revising its written speech policies to earn a “green light” Spotlight rating, adopting a free speech statement based on the Chicago Statement, and adopting an official commitment to institutional neutrality.

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



43% 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.



46% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

1.3:1

There are roughly 1.30 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

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

O

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

O

DEPLATFORMINGS

O