

The University of Iowa

Iowa City, IA • 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

63 ▲

/257

▲ 153 FROM 2024

GRADE

D -

— D- FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

0

— 0 FROM 2025

Overview

The University of Iowa ranks 63 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 62, a D- speech climate grade. It has a “yellow light” Spotlight rating, and the University of Iowa System has adopted the Chicago Statement — applying to the flagship institution.

Student perceptions place UI in the top 25 for “Administrative Support,” suggesting confidence in the administration’s backing of free expression compared to other schools. But the university ranks in the bottom 50 for “Self-Censorship.”

UI could improve by revising its remaining restrictive policies to earn a “green light” Spotlight rating and officially committing 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



44% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



67% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



28% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

1.22:1

There are roughly 1.22 liberal students for every one conservative student.

Institutional Neutrality

NOT ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D

▲ INCREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C+

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

C

▲ INCREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

F

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

D-

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

O

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

O

DEPLATFORMINGS

O