

Bates College

Lewiston, ME • 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

226 ▲

/257

▲ -79 FROM 2024

GRADE

F

— F FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

0

— 0 FROM 2025

Overview

Bates College ranks 226 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 52, an F speech climate grade. The college's written policies continue to earn a "red light" Spotlight rating, and the school has yet to adopt the Chicago Statement or an official commitment to neutrality.

Student perceptions rank Bates in the top 50 on "Disruptive Conduct" — a dramatic rise from the bottom 50 a year ago — indicating less support for shout-downs and similar tactics. However, the college places in the bottom 50 for "Political Tolerance," signaling reluctance to host controversial speakers.

Bates could improve by revising its written speech policies to earn a "green light" Spotlight rating, as well as adopting the Chicago Statement and an official commitment to institutional neutrality.

Spotlight Rating

Red



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



31% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



62% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



15% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

3.94:1

There are roughly 3.94 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

B-

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

C

▼ DECREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D-

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▲ INCREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

DEPLATFORMINGS

0