

Wayne State University

Detroit, MI • 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

126 ▼

/257

▼ -88 FROM 2024

GRADE

F

▼ D- FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

1

— 1 FROM 2025

Overview

Wayne State University ranks 126 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings. The drop from last year coincided with a penalty tied to campus police halting a pro-Palestinian vigil that administrators had previously approved.

Students report lower scores across the survey compared to last year's responses except for "Disruptive Conduct," where more students now find attempts to stop speakers less acceptable. Wayne State places in the top 50 for both "Comfort Expressing Ideas" and "Openness" to tough conversations. These strengths were outweighed by a persistent "yellow light" Spotlight rating and the absence of both the Chicago Statement and institutional neutrality.

Wayne State 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

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



45% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



70% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



31% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

1.38:1

There are roughly 1.38 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+

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

C+

▼ DECREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

F

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▼ DECREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

1

DEPLATFORMINGS

0