

# Washington University in St. Louis

St. Louis, MO • 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

72 ▲  
/257

▲ 115 FROM 2024

## GRADE

D-

▲ F FROM 2024

## SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

1

0 FROM 2025

## Overview

Washington University in St. Louis ranks 72 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 61, with a D- speech climate grade. WashU recently adopted a statement on institutional neutrality in collaboration with Vanderbilt but still earns a “yellow light” Spotlight rating.

Student perceptions place WashU in the top 50 for “Openness,” signaling a relative willingness to engage with controversial ideas compared to other schools. That bright spot is tempered by bottom-50 placements for both “Comfort Expressing Ideas” and “Administrative Support,” suggesting many students hesitate to speak freely and doubt the administration’s backing when they do speak.

The university could strengthen its speech environment by revising restrictive policies to earn a “green light” Spotlight rating.

### Spotlight Rating

Yellow

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

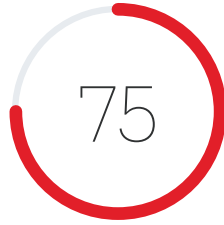
If you are a school administrator and would like to discuss your rating, reach out to [speechcodes@thefire.org](mailto:speechcodes@thefire.org).

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.



75% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



34% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

5.44:1

There are roughly 5.44 liberal students for every one conservative student.

### Institutional Neutrality

ADOPTED



### Chicago Statement for Free Speech

ADOPTED



## SCORE DEEP DIVE

### COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D-

▲ INCREASE

### DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C+

▲ INCREASE

### OPENNESS

C+

▲ INCREASE

### SELF-CENSORSHIP

D-

▲ INCREASE

### ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▼ DECREASE

### POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASE

### SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

1

### STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

### DEPLATFORMINGS

0