

Columbia University

New York, NY • 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

256 ▲

/257

▲ -6 FROM 2024

GRADE

F

— F FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

11

5 FROM 2025

Overview

Columbia University ranks second to last, following a string of investigations, classroom disruptions, and suspensions — just above its sister school, Barnard College.

Columbia ranks in the bottom 10 for “Comfort Expressing Ideas” and “Administrative Support,” and in the bottom 50 for “Self-Censorship.”

This near-bottom ranking reflects a campus where free expression is consistently undermined by administrative overreach, unclear policies, and limited student understanding of First Amendment principles. To begin reversing course, Columbia should revise its speech codes to earn a “green light” Spotlight rating, formally adopt a commitment to institutional neutrality, and limit administrative investigations to conduct that clearly falls outside the bounds of protected speech. Beyond policy, Columbia must work to rebuild trust by making clear — in both word and action — that it values open inquiry and will defend students’ and faculty members’ rights to express dissenting views without fear of punishment or censorship.

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.

Spotlight Rating

Yellow

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

HIGHLIGHTS



63% 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.



26% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

4.02:1

There are roughly 4.02 liberal students for every one conservative student.

Institutional Neutrality

NOT ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

F

▼ DECREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C+

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

C-

▼ DECREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

F

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▼ DECREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▲ INCREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

4

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

5

DEPLATFORMINGS

2