

Appalachian State University

Boone, NC • 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

8 ▲

/257

▲ 16 FROM 2024

GRADE

C

▲ C- FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

0

— 0 FROM 2025

Overview

Appalachian State University ranks 8 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 73, earning a C speech climate grade. The university earns a “green light” Spotlight rating and benefits from a University of North Carolina System adoption of the Chicago Statement and institutional neutrality — signaling strong written commitments to free expression.

Student perceptions are mixed. App State ranks in the top 50 for “Administrative Support,” suggesting confidence that leaders back open dialogue compared to other schools. In contrast, App State places in the bottom 25 on “Self-Censorship,” indicating many students feel pressure to keep quiet about controversial views.

Addressing the gap between policy and practice remains App State’s most pressing challenge. The university ranks 158 in “Openness” and a striking 253 in “Self-Censorship,” suggesting that many students are hesitant to express themselves despite strong institutional commitments. By strengthening orientation efforts and reinforcing the value of free inquiry throughout the semester, App State can better translate its written policies into a more open campus culture.

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

Green



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

HIGHLIGHTS



38% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



76% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



30% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

1.47:1

There are roughly 1.47 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

F

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

D-

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▲ INCREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

O

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

O

DEPLATFORMINGS

O