

Wake Forest University

Winston-Salem, NC • 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

186 ▼

/257

▼ -108 FROM 2024

GRADE

F

— F FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

1

0 FROM 2025

Overview

Wake Forest University ranks 186 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings. Its score holds steady at 55, an F speech climate grade. The school still earns a “yellow light” Spotlight rating.

Student feedback paints a mixed picture. Wake Forest ranks in the top 25 for “Openness,” signaling a comparatively greater willingness for students to talk through controversial topics. The school ranks in the bottom 25 for “Comfort Expressing Ideas,” suggesting many do not feel safe voicing those views aloud.

Wake Forest could start building trust by revising its speech policies to earn a “green light” Spotlight rating and formally adopting the Chicago Statement.”

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



49% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



73% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



36% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

1.02:1

There are roughly 1.02 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+

▼ DECREASE

OPENNESS

C+

▲ INCREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D-

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▼ DECREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

DEPLATFORMINGS

1