

Middle Tennessee State University

Murfreesboro, TN • 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

15

/257

GRADE

C-

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

0

Overview

Making its debut in the rankings, Middle Tennessee State University ranks 15 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings, earning a score of 72 and a C- speech climate grade. Its strong performance is bolstered by a “green light” Spotlight rating and adoption of the Chicago Statement, which together signal clear institutional support for free expression.

Student perceptions, however, present a mixed picture. MTSU places in the top 50 for “Political Tolerance,” indicating comparatively greater willingness to host speakers from across the ideological spectrum. At the same time, the university lands in the bottom 50 on “Openness,” suggesting many students hesitate to discuss certain controversial issues.

MTSU could strengthen its free speech culture further by adopting an official commitment to institutional neutrality and facilitating programs that encourage substantive dialogue on difficult topics.

Spotlight Rating

Green



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



43% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



65% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



28% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

1.49:1

There are roughly 1.49 liberal students for every one conservative student.

Institutional Neutrality

NOT ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C+

OPENNESS

D+

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D-

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

O

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

O

DEPLATFORMINGS

O