

# The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Knoxville, 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

36 ▲  
/257

▲ 59 FROM 2024

## GRADE

D+ ▲

▲ D FROM 2024

## SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

2

1 FROM 2025

## Overview

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville ranks 36 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 67 and a D+ speech climate grade. UT Knoxville improved over last year, helped by the administration's swift public defense of the College Republicans after complaints about the group's social media posts, which earned the school a small bonus and offset an earlier penalty.

Student perceptions place UT Knoxville in the top 25 for perceived "Administrative Support" of free expression, and the university earns a "green light" Spotlight rating — both bright spots in its profile.

UT Knoxville could solidify its gains by formally adopting the Chicago Statement and an official commitment to institutional neutrality.

### Spotlight Rating

Green



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

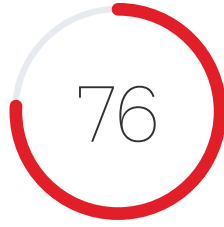
If you are a school administrator and would like to discuss your rating, reach out to [speechcodes@thefire.org](mailto:speechcodes@thefire.org).

Visit our website: <https://rankings.thefire.org/> for more information.

HIGHLIGHTS



48% 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.



32% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

1.82:1

There are roughly 1.82 conservative students for every one liberal student.

Institutional Neutrality

NOT ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

NOT 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

▼ DECREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

1

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

1

DEPLATFORMINGS

0