

The University of Virginia

Charlottesville, VA • 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

21 
/257

 -20 FROM 2024

GRADE

C-

— C- FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

1

— 1 FROM 2025

Overview

The University of Virginia ranks 21 out of 257 schools in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 70, earning a C- speech climate grade. The university adopted institutional neutrality this year, complementing its long-standing “green light” Spotlight rating, yet it also absorbed a small penalty after an administrator threatened to remove a peaceful student protester from outside of their Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center and School before reversing course.

Student perceptions are poor with UVA failing to rank in the top 100 for any area. UVA ranks in the bottom 50 for both “Comfort Expressing Ideas” and “Administrative Support,” signaling relative unease and skepticism toward leadership despite strong written policies.

To close the gap between policy and perception, students must see their rights defended in both words and actions. UVA leadership should more clearly and proactively articulate the value of expressive rights, particularly during moments of controversy. In addition, UVA should incorporate robust First Amendment education into first-year orientation to help students understand not only their rights, but also where lawful expression ends and unprotected conduct begins.

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



35% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



77% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



33% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

5.29:1

There are roughly 5.29 liberal students for every one conservative student.

Institutional Neutrality

ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D-

▼ DECREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

C

▼ DECREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

F

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▼ DECREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

1

DEPLATFORMINGS

0