

University of Southern California

Los Angeles, CA • 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

198 ▲

/261

▲ 18 FROM 2025

GRADE

F

F FROM 2025

CONTROVERSIES

2

1 FROM 2026

Overview

University of Southern California ranks 198 out of 261 schools in the 2027 College Free Speech Rankings, with a score of 57 and an F speech climate grade. USC was penalized after administrators canceled a gubernatorial debate amid controversy over participation criteria.

The campus is in the bottom 50 for “Administrative Support,” indicating students doubt that officials will defend free speech.

USC has adopted an official commitment to institutional neutrality. Since data collection for the 2027 rankings ended, USC also revised its policies to earn a “green light” Spotlight rating and adjusted its free speech commitment to more closely track the principles of the Chicago Statement. If these changes had been recorded prior to the rankings deadline, USC would have ranked 37.

Administrators should share these changes with students and defend free speech whenever censorship occurs or is demanded.

[View the Full Spotlight Rating](#)

If you are a school administrator and would like to discuss your rating, reach out to speechcodes@fire.org.

Visit our website, rankings.fire.org, for more information.

Spotlight Rating

Yellow



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

HIGHLIGHTS



41% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



70% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



29% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

4.17 : 1

There are roughly 4.17 liberal students for every one conservative student.

Institutional Neutrality

ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

NOT ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D

▲ INCREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C+

— NO CHANGE

OPENNESS

C

▲ INCREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D

▲ INCREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

— NO CHANGE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

DEPLATFORMINGS

2