

American University

Washington, DC • 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

155 ▼

/261

▼ -37 FROM 2025

GRADE

F

▼ D- FROM 2025

CONTROVERSIES

1

1 FROM 2026

Overview

American University ranks 155 out of 261 schools in the 2027 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 59 and an F speech climate grade, dropping 37 places from last year.

AU ranks in the top 50 for “Openness,” meaning fewer contentious topics feel off-limits to students. It lands in the bottom 50 for “Political Tolerance” and “Administrative Support,” showing reduced student willingness to host controversial speakers and little trust that officials will defend speech.

AU’s Faculty Senate affirmed the pro-free speech Chicago Statement, but it retains a “yellow light” Spotlight rating. AU should revise student codes to earn a “green light” Spotlight rating and adopt an official commitment to institutional neutrality. Given its weak showing on “Administrative Support,” administrators should respond clearly and forcefully to 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



36% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



69% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



24% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

9.31 : 1

There are roughly 9.31 liberal students for every one conservative student.

Institutional Neutrality

NOT ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D

▲ INCREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C+

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

C+

▲ INCREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D

▲ INCREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▼ DECREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

DEPLATFORMINGS

1