Howard University

College Free Speech RANKINGS

The most comprehensive guide to free speech on campus — anywhere

Because a true university education requires freedom of expression.

Washington, DC • Private School

The College Free Speech Rankings are based on student surveys, campus policies, and recent speech-related controversies.

OVERALL RANK

252 /261

▼ -6 FROM 2025

GRADE

F

F FROM 2025

CONTROVERSIES

2

1 FROM 2026

Overview

Howard University ranks 252 out of 261 schools in the 2027 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 51 and an F speech climate grade. It was penalized for requiring athletic teams to stand for the national anthem after the women's basketball team knelt in protest before a game against the U.S. Military Academy.

Howard ranks in the top 25 for "Comfort Expressing Ideas," indicating student comfort sharing views on controversial topics. However, it lands in the bottom 25 for "Political Tolerance" and "Disruptive Conduct," showing reduced student willingness to host controversial speakers and acceptance of non-peaceful protest.

Howard earns a "red light" Spotlight rating. It should revise student policies to earn a "green light" Spotlight rating and adopt the pro-free speech Chicago Statement and institutional neutrality. Howard should clearly and forcefully defend free speech whenever censorship occurs or is demanded.

Spotlight Rating

Red



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

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.

HIGHLIGHTS



34% 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.



46% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

14.29 : 1

There are roughly 14.29 liberal students for every one conservative student.

Institutional Neutrality

NOT ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

NOT ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

C–

▲ INCREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C–

▼ DECREASE

OPENNESS

B–

— NO CHANGE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D

— NO CHANGE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

1

DEPLATFORMINGS

1