Iowa State University

Ames, IA • Public School

College Free Speech RANKINGS

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
46 ▼
/261
▼ -6 FROM 2025

GRADE
D+
▲ D FROM 2025

CONTROVERSIES
0
0 FROM 2026

Overview

Iowa State University ranks 46 out of 261 schools in the 2027 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 67 and a D+ speech climate grade.

The campus ranks in the top 25 for "Political Tolerance," showing comparatively greater student willingness to host speakers across the ideological spectrum, and "Administrative Support," suggesting students trust the administration to defend free speech.

Iowa State has adopted the pro-free speech Chicago Statement but retains a "yellow light" Spotlight rating. It should revise student policies to earn a "green light" Spotlight rating and adopt an official commitment to institutional neutrality. Iowa State should respond clearly and forcefully to defend free speech whenever censorship occurs or is demanded. Doing so will demonstrate the university's commitment to free speech and build community trust that the administration will defend expressive rights.

View the Full Spotlight Rating

Spotlight Rating
Yellow



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@fire.org.

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

HIGHLIGHTS



45% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



63% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



20% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

1.4 : 1

There are roughly 1.4 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

B

— NO CHANGE

OPENNESS

D+

— NO CHANGE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D

▲ INCREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

D

▼ DECREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▲ INCREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

DEPLATFORMINGS

0