Bates College

Lewiston, ME • Private 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
230
/261
▼ -4 FROM 2025

GRADE
F
F FROM 2025

CONTROVERSIES
0
0 FROM 2026

Overview

Bates College ranks 230 out of 261 schools in the 2027 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 54 and an F speech climate grade.

Bates ranks in the top 25 for "Disruptive Conduct," showing lower student acceptance of non-peaceful forms of protest. However, it tumbled 139 places from last year into the bottom 25 for "Comfort Expressing Ideas" this year, indicating students feel constrained sharing views on controversial topics.

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

View the Full Spotlight Rating

Spotlight Rating
Red

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



42% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



66% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



9% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

5.09 : 1

There are roughly 5.09 liberal students for every one conservative student.

Institutional Neutrality

NOT ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

NOT ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D–

▼ DECREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

B

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

C–

▼ DECREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D

▲ INCREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

— NO CHANGE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

DEPLATFORMINGS

0