

Pennsylvania State University

University Park, PA • Public 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

163 ▼

/261

▼ -54 FROM 2025

GRADE

F

F FROM 2025

CONTROVERSIES

1

1 FROM 2026

Overview

Pennsylvania State University ranks 163 out of 261 schools in the 2027 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 59 and an F speech climate grade. Penn State fell 54 places from last year, and its ranking includes a penalty stemming from a campus police investigation opened after a student shared an anti-ICE flyer online.

The campus is in the bottom 50 for “Comfort Expressing Ideas,” indicating students feel constrained when sharing views on controversial topics. The data shows no top 50 strengths.

Penn State retains a “yellow 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. Given this year’s incident, Penn State 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



47% 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.



34% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

2.15 : 1

There are roughly 2.15 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

— NO CHANGE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C+

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

C-

— NO CHANGE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D

▲ INCREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

D-

— NO CHANGE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

1

DEPLATFORMINGS

0