University of South Carolina

Columbia, SC • *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

14 ▲

/261

▲ 8 **FROM 2025**

GRADE

C

▲ C- **FROM 2025**

CONTROVERSIES

1

1 FROM 2026

Overview

The University of South Carolina ranks 14 out of 261 schools in the 2027 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 74 and a C speech climate grade. The school maintains a "green light" Spotlight rating, and South Carolina's board has affirmed the pro-free speech Chicago Statement.

The campus ranks in the top 25 for "Administrative Support," suggesting students trust the administration to defend free speech. However, it lands in the bottom 25 for "Self-Censorship" and "Openness," indicating students frequently stay silent and many contentious topics feel off-limits.

South Carolina should 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 university's commitment to free speech and build community trust that the administration will defend expressive rights.

Spotlight Rating

Green



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



38% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



67% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



25% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

1.24 : 1

There are roughly 1.24 conservative students for every one liberal student.

Institutional Neutrality

NOT ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D–

— NO CHANGE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

B–

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

D

▼ DECREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D–

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

D+

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▲ INCREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

DEPLATFORMINGS

1