Southern Methodist University

Dallas, TX • 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

52 ▲

/261

▲ 32 FROM 2025

GRADE

D

▲ D- FROM 2025

CONTROVERSIES

0

0 FROM 2026

Overview

Southern Methodist University ranks 52 out of 261 schools in the 2027 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 66 and a D speech climate grade, climbing 32 places and gaining 6 points.

SMU ranks in the top 25 for "Disruptive Conduct," showing lower student acceptance of non-peaceful forms of protest. Its "Administrative Support" rank jumped 112 places from last year, suggesting improved trust in officials. It lands in the bottom 50 for "Openness," meaning many contentious topics feel off-limits to students.

SMU has adopted a commitment to institutional neutrality, and its faculty senate has affirmed the pro-free speech Chicago Statement, but it maintains a "yellow light" Spotlight rating. SMU should revise student policies to earn a "green light" Spotlight rating. It should respond clearly and forcefully to defend free speech whenever censorship occurs or is demanded.

Spotlight Rating

Yellow

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



46% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



59% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



26% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

1.22 : 1

There are roughly 1.22 liberal students for every one conservative student.

Institutional Neutrality

ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS
D
▲ INCREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT
B
— NO CHANGE

OPENNESS
D
▲ INCREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP
D
▲ INCREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT
D–
▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE
F
▲ INCREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE
0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE
0

DEPLATFORMINGS
0