

University of Wisconsin - Madison

Madison, WI • 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

61
/261

▲ 40 FROM 2025

GRADE

D

▲ D- FROM 2025

CONTROVERSIES

1

0 FROM 2026

Overview

The University of Wisconsin-Madison ranks 61 out of 261 schools in the 2027 College Free Speech Rankings with a score of 65 and a D speech climate grade, climbing 40 places and gaining 5 points from last year.

UW-Madison ranks in the top 25 for “Political Tolerance,” showing comparatively greater student willingness to host speakers across the ideological spectrum. The University of Wisconsin System has affirmed the pro-free speech Chicago Statement and a statement on institutional neutrality, which apply to UW-Madison.

UW-Madison maintains a “yellow light” Spotlight rating. It should revise student policies to earn a “green light” Spotlight rating and 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](#)

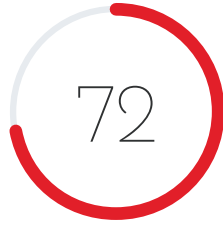
If you are a school administrator and would like to discuss your rating, reach out to speechcodes@fire.org.

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

HIGHLIGHTS



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



72% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



29% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

3.06 : 1

There are roughly 3.06 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

C+

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

C

▲ INCREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D

▼ DECREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

D-

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

— NO CHANGE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

0

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

0

DEPLATFORMINGS

1