



Illinois

12 schools ranked



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.

AVERAGE RANK

156 ▼
/257

▼ 30 FROM 2024

AVERAGE GRADE

F

▼ DECREASED

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

8

— 0 FROM 2025

Overview

Twelve Illinois schools are ranked in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings. The state’s average speech-climate grade is F, matching the national average.

The University of Chicago ranks 3 overall and is the top-ranked school in the state. UChicago is the original author of the pro-free speech Chicago Statement and Kalven Report on institutional neutrality. Both of which the school continues to affirm as evidenced by its top performance on “Administrative Support,” suggesting that students believe the university would defend free speech during a controversy. Northwestern University ranks 119 and is the only other school in the state to have adopted both major statements.

Northeastern Illinois University follows, ranking 65. Most other Illinois schools rank far lower. Loyola University Chicago is the bottom-ranked school in the state at 248. Four of the 12 schools have “red light” policies, meaning their written policies clearly and substantially restrict protected expression.

Illinois is home to some of the nation’s strongest and weakest campus speech environments. Raising the floor through policy reform and broader commitment to expressive rights would help close the state’s gap.

If you have questions, reach out to fire@thefire.org or visit us at <https://rankings.thefire.org/>.

HIGHLIGHTS



43% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



71% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



37% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

3.09:1

Across Illinois, there are roughly 3.09 liberal students for every one conservative student.

SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D

▲ INCREASED

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C

— NO CHANGE

OPENNESS

C

— NO CHANGE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D-

▼ DECREASED

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▲ INCREASED

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

— NO CHANGE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

1

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

3

DEPLATFORMINGS

4

HONOR ROLL STATEMENTS

1

ATTEMPTED DISRUPTIONS

2

NEW IN 2025

1