



North Carolina

10 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

43 ▼

/257

▼ 2 FROM 2024

AVERAGE GRADE

D+

▼ DECREASED

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

5

— 1 FROM 2025

Overview

Ten North Carolina schools are ranked in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings. The state’s average speech-climate grade is D+, compared to a national average of F. North Carolina boasts one of the largest concentrations of top-performing campuses in the country — six schools in the state rank in the top 25.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro ranks 6 overall and is the top-ranked school in the state. All seven UNC system campuses in the rankings hold “green light” ratings in FIRE’s Spotlight database, meaning their written policies do not seriously threaten student expression. The University of North Carolina System Board of Governors has adopted the pro-free speech Chicago Statement and a statement on institutional neutrality, applying to all UNC system schools in the rankings.

Davidson College ranks 78 and holds a “yellow light” rating. It has adopted the Chicago Statement but not institutional neutrality. Wake Forest University ranks 186 and is the lowest-ranked school in the state. It holds a “yellow light” rating and has not adopted either statement. Strengthening campus policies and expanding free speech protections would help Wake Forest catch up to its higher-performing peers.

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

HIGHLIGHTS



45% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



73% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



36% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

1.91 : 1

Across North Carolina, there are roughly 1.91 liberal students for every one conservative student.

SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D

▲ INCREASED

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C

▲ INCREASED

OPENNESS

C-

▲ INCREASED

SELF-CENSORSHIP

F

▼ DECREASED

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▲ INCREASED

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASED

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

1

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

2

DEPLATFORMINGS

3

HONOR ROLL STATEMENTS

2

ATTEMPTED DISRUPTIONS

1

NEW IN 2025

2