



Illinois

12 schools ranked



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.

AVERAGE RANK

164 ▼
/261

▼ -8 FROM 2025

AVERAGE GRADE

F

— NO CHANGE

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

6

— 1 IN 2026

Overview

Twelve Illinois schools are ranked in the 2027 College Free Speech Rankings. The state's average speech climate grade is F, below the national average of D-.

The University of Chicago ranks 1 overall. It holds a “green light” rating in FIRE’s Spotlight database. UChicago is the original author of the pro-free speech Chicago Statement and Kalven Report on institutional neutrality. It ranks first nationally for “Administrative Support,” suggesting students trust leaders to defend speech.

Northeastern Illinois University and Northwestern University follow at 74 and 90, respectively. Northwestern has adopted the Chicago Statement and a statement on institutional neutrality. Most other campuses hold “yellow light” ratings, but four hold “red light” ratings, including Loyola University Chicago (254). Reforming restrictive student policies would help improve these schools’ speech climates.

If you have questions, reach out to fire@fire.org or visit us at rankings.fire.org/.



HIGHLIGHTS



40% 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.



33% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

4.29:1

Across Illinois, there are roughly 4.29 liberal students for every one conservative student.

SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

D+

▲ INCREASED

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C+

▲ INCREASED

OPENNESS

C

— NO CHANGE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D

▲ INCREASED

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

D-

▲ INCREASED

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▼ DECREASED

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

1

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

3

DEPLATFORMINGS

2

HONOR ROLL STATEMENTS

0

ATTEMPTED DISRUPTIONS

0

NEW IN 2026

1