2025 College Free Speech Rankings
Villanova University

185

OVERALL RANK

SLIGHTLY BELOW AVERAGE

SPEECH CLIMATE

RED

SPOTLIGHT RATING

FIRE
Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression

2025 College Free Speech Rankings
Villanova University

Executive Summary

FOR THE FIFTH YEAR IN A ROW, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), a nonprofit organization committed to defending and sustaining the individual rights of all Americans to free speech and free thought, and College Pulse surveyed college undergraduates about their perceptions and experiences regarding free speech on their campuses.

This year's survey includes 58,807 student respondents from 257 colleges and universities. Students who were enrolled in four-year degree programs were surveyed via the College Pulse mobile app and web portal from January 25 through June 17, 2024.

The College Free Speech Rankings are available online and are presented in an interactive dashboard (**rankings.thefire.org**) that allows for easy comparison between institutions.

Villanova University was one of the 257 schools surveyed, with 251 ranked. Key findings from this school include:

- A ranking of 185 overall, with an overall score of 41.12 and a "Slightly Below Average" speech climate.

- While Villanova ranked well on "Tolerance of Difference" (39) and "Disruptive Conduct" (60), it achieved mediocre marks for "Administrative Support" (143), "Openness" (132), and "Tolerance for Conservative Speakers" (173).

- Villanova performed poorly for "Comfort" (210), near the bottom for "Mean Tolerance" (248), and dead last for "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers" (251).

- Villanova was penalized for an incident in which it told a student that she and an unnamed student group could not promote contraceptive use off-campus.

- Villanova continues to maintain speech policies that earn it a "red light" rating from FIRE.

- If Villanova revised these policies and earned a "green light" rating, it would have ranked 21 overall.

Full Report

IN 2020, FIRE, in collaboration with College Pulse and RealClearEducation, launched a first-of-its-kind tool to help high school students and their parents identify which colleges promote and protect the free exchange of ideas: the College Free Speech Rankings. The response to the rankings report and corresponding online tool was overwhelmingly positive.

This year FIRE and College Pulse surveyed 257 schools, ranking 251 of them.[1] Villanova University ("Villanova"), with a score of 41.12, has a "Slightly Below Average" speech climate and ranks 185 overall in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings. This is Villanova's first year in the rankings.

Among other ranked schools in Pennsylvania, Villanova was in the middle, coming in behind Carnegie Mellon (41), Swarthmore College (60), Temple University (65), Lehigh University (112), Franklin and Marshall College (118), Bucknell (126), and Drexel University (145), but ahead of Haverford College (190), Gettysburg College (197), University of Pittsburgh (208), Lafayette College (213), Duquesne University (222), Pennsylvania State University (228), and the University of Pennsylvania (248).

HOW COMFORTABLE ARE VILLANOVA STUDENTS EXPRESSING THEIR VIEWS ON CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS?

> *"In discussion based classes I always respond with the same political viewpoint as my vocal peers and professor."*

Compared to other institutions, Villanova University's students are more uncomfortable expressing their views on controversial issues, earning Villanova a ranking of 210 overall on the "Comfort Expressing Ideas" component.

A majority of Villanova students felt somewhat or very uncomfortable talking about a controversial political topic in each situation asked about. Situations ranged from disagreeing with a professor in a written assignment (49%) to sharing an opinion with fellow students on a social media account tied to their name (70%).

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1   Six of the schools surveyed received a "Warning" rating from FIRE for their speech policies. An overall score was calculated separately for these schools, comparing them only to each other.

HOW OFTEN ARE VILLANOVA STUDENTS SELF-CENSORING ON CAMPUS?

> *"I feel uncomfortable sharing opinions to other students outside of close friends out of fear I will face social consequences."*

Villanova University had a middling rank of 107 overall in the "Self-Censorship" component.

- 23% of Villanova students say they self-censor a couple times a week or more in conversations with other students compared to 24% of students nationally.

- 30% of Villanova students say they self-censor a couple times a week or more in conversations with their professors compared to 25% of students nationally.

- 24% of Villanova students say they self-censor a couple times a week or more in classroom discussions compared to 26% of students nationally.

WHAT TOPICS ARE DIFFICULT FOR VILLANOVA STUDENTS TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT?

> *"There was a moment in class where we were discussing abortion and I felt uncomfortable as my views were different than some of the other classmates. I thought the other students would respond poorly and judge me."*

Villanova University's "Openness" rank is also middling at 132.

Students were given a list of 20 topics and asked to select which they felt were difficult to have an open and honest conversation about on their campus. A majority of Villanova students find it difficult to have conversations about only one topic, abortion (56%). In contrast, only 45% of students nationally find it difficult to have conversations about abortion. However, a majority of students nationally (54%) find it difficult to talk about the Israel-Palestinian conflict compared to just 45% at Villanova.

WHICH SPEAKERS DO VILLANOVA STUDENTS CONSIDER CONTROVERSIAL?

Villanova University ranks highly on the "Tolerance Difference" component (39 overall) because students have a low tolerance of both liberal (ranking last at 251) and conservative (173) speakers.

To assess speaker tolerance, students were asked the following question:

> *Student groups often invite speakers to campus to express their views on a range of topics. Regardless of your own views on the topic, should your school ALLOW or NOT ALLOW a speaker on campus who has previously expressed the following idea?*

Students were then presented with six different speakers who had previously expressed a controversial idea (three liberal, three conservative) in random order. The percentage of students who said they would

"probably" or "definitely" allow each of the three controversial liberal speakers on campus ranged from 19% ("The police are just as racist as the Ku Klux Klan") to 26% ("Children should be able to transition without parental consent"). Nationally, support ranged from 47% ("The police are just as racist as the Ku Klux Klan") to 56% ("Children should be able to transition without parental consent").

Controversial conservative speakers were only slightly more supported than the liberal speakers. The percentage of students who said they would "probably" or "definitely" allow each of the three controversial conservative speakers on campus ranged from 22% ("Black Lives Matter is a hate group") to 41% ("Abortion should be completely illegal"). For comparison, nationally, from 32% ("Black Lives Matter is a hate group") to 45% ("Abortion should be completely illegal") of students said they would "probably" or "definitely" allow each of the three controversial conservative speakers on campus.

The favoritism toward allowing controversial conservative speakers on campus is likely due to the ideological makeup of the student body. As a private Catholic school, Villanova has a student body that is predominantly conservative, with eight conservatives for every five liberals.

Additionally, this year's survey asked about two speakers relevant to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, though responses did not impact rankings. At Villanova, 70% oppose bringing to campus a speaker who said that "collateral damage in Gaza is justified for the sake of Israeli security," whereas only 50% oppose someone who said, "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free." Nationally, 60% of students oppose bringing to campus a speaker who said that "collateral damage in Gaza is justified for the sake of Israeli security." Only 29% oppose someone who said, "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

WHAT KINDS OF DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT DO VILLANOVA STUDENTS CONSIDER ACCEPTABLE?

Villanova University performed well on the "Disruptive Conduct" component, ranking 60 overall.

Despite few students supporting controversial speakers, Villanova students don't generally support shouting down a speaker or other conduct that would disrupt a speech. 2 in 5 Villanova students (38%) believe it is never acceptable to shout down a speaker compared with 32% of students nationally. Two-thirds (67%) of students believe using violence to stop a campus speech is never acceptable. And nearly half (49%) believe it is never acceptable to block other students from attending a speech.

HOW IS VILLANOVA'S ADMINISTRATIVE STANCE ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH PERCEIVED?

Villanova University also performed middling on the "Administrative Support" component (143 overall).

Thirty percent of Villanova students said that the administration's protection of free speech on campus is "very" or "extremely" clear and another 51% said that it is "somewhat" clear. When it comes to whether the administration will defend a speaker's rights during a controversy, 24% of Villanova students said this is "very" or "extremely" likely and another 48% said that it is "somewhat" likely.

Villanova received two penalties for an incident in 2023 in which a student named Elisa Carroll approached the school about her intention to — along with an unnamed, unofficial student group — hand out and advocate for the use of condoms and dental dams at an off-campus sidewalk. An administrator told Carroll that, given the sidewalk's proximity to campus and because Carroll is a Villanova student, the university could prevent her from promoting any contraceptive advocacy, including handing out contraceptives. While Villanova backtracked after intervention from FIRE and clarified that the student wouldn't be prevented from off-campus advocacy, the situation might chill future student advocacy.

A 'RED LIGHT' SCHOOL

FIRE awards Villanova's regulations on student expression a "red light" rating, flagging one red light policy and thirteen "yellow light" policies. Policies earn a red light rating for placing clear and substantial restrictions on free speech, while yellow light policies place more vague restrictions or clear restrictions on a more narrow area of speech.

Villanova's sole red light policy is a regulation on posting, which, among other concerns, states that posters will not be approved if the message "offends community standards of good taste," is "demeaning to specific social groups," or "denies respect for the dignity of individuals." However, consistent with First Amendment standards, speech cannot be limited merely because an administrator finds it offensive to good taste, demeaning, or disrespectful. This regulation gives administrators discretion to remove postings based on viewpoint and might have a chilling effect on students who wish to share unpopular opinions.

HOW CAN VILLANOVA IMPROVE?

Villanova University can improve its rating by revising its red light speech policy. To do so, Villanova should provide only viewpoint-neutral criteria for the approval of posters, banning materials that constitute harassment, threats, or other areas of misconduct that are not protected under First Amendment standards. If it were to revise this policy, it would improve to an overall yellow light rating.

Obtaining a better speech code rating, however, does not by itself guarantee that a school actively supports free speech. Student perceptions of an administration's support for free speech on campus are just that — perceptions — which are subject to their own idiosyncrasies and could change quickly year-to-year simply due to student turnover. The proof of whether a school truly supports free expression as a core value comes when that core value is tested by controversy.

The decisions administrators make in response to campus speech controversies are likely to have a more lasting influence on an individual school's climate for free expression than its policies or its students' perceptions of "Administrative Support." When a decision is made unequivocally in defense of free speech, it sends one kind of message to a school's students and faculty. When a response is tepid or, worse, violates someone's speech rights, it sends a very different kind of message. Defending the speech rights of students, scholars, and invited speakers on campus would provide Villanova with a boost, instead of a penalty, in the College Free Speech Rankings.

Villanova's middle-of-the-road rating for administrative support indicates that the school's messaging regarding freedom of expression could be more clear. Currently the school promises freedom of expression, but undermines that promise with restrictive speech codes, leaving students uncertain as to whether the administration will allow them to speak freely. This confusion is likely only furthered by the Elisa Carroll situation, where Villanova forbade a student from off-campus advocacy only to later backtrack.

To ensure that students are not only able to express themselves, but also comfortable doing so, Villanova should clearly express its support for free speech and abide by that principle consistently.

Methodology

THE COLLEGE FREE SPEECH RANKINGS SURVEY was developed by FIRE and administered by College Pulse. No donors to the project took part in designing or conducting the survey. The survey was fielded from January 25 through June 17, 2024. These data come from a sample of 58,807 undergraduates who were then enrolled full-time in four-year degree programs at one of a list of 258 colleges and universities in the United States. The margin of error for the U.S. undergraduate population is +/- 0.4 of a percentage point, and the margin of error for college student sub-demographics ranges from 2-5 percentage points.

The initial sample was drawn from College Pulse's American College Student Panel™, which includes more than 850,000 verified undergraduate students and recent alumni from schools within a range of more than 1,500 two- and four-year colleges and universities in all 50 states. Panel members were recruited by a number of methods to help ensure student diversity in the panel population. These methods include web advertising, permission-based email campaigns, and partnerships with university-affiliated organizations. To ensure the panel reflects the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the American college population, College Pulse recruited panelists from a wide variety of institutions. The panel includes students attending large public universities, small private colleges, online universities, historically Black colleges such as Howard University, women's colleges such as Smith College, and religiously-affiliated colleges such as Brigham Young University.

College Pulse uses a two-stage validation process to ensure that all its surveys include only students currently enrolled in two-year or four-year colleges or universities. Students are required to provide an ".edu" email address to join the panel and, for this survey, had to acknowledge that they are currently enrolled full-time in a four-year degree program. All invitations to complete surveys were sent using the student's ".edu" email address or through a notification in the College Pulse app, available on iOS and Android platforms.

College Pulse applies a post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from multiple data sources, including the Current Population Survey (CPS), the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The "weight" rebalances the sample based on a number of important benchmark attributes, such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status, and financial aid status. The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IFP) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables to produce a representative sample of four year undergraduate students in the United States.

This year College Pulse introduced a similar post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from multiple data sources, including the Current Population Survey (CPS), the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The "school universe weight" rebalances the sample based on a number of important benchmark attributes, such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status, and financial aid status. The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IFP) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables to produce a representative sample of four year undergraduate students from the 257 colleges and universities surveyed.

College Pulse also applies a post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from the Current Population Survey (CPS), the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). This "school weight" rebalances the sample from each individual school surveyed based on a number of important benchmark attributes, such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status, and financial aid status. The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IFP) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables to produce a representative sample of students at each individual school.

All weights are trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results and to ensure over-sampled population groups do not completely lose their voice.

The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target populations. Even with these adjustments, surveys may be subject to error or bias due to question wording, context, and order effects.

For further information, please see: **https://collegepulse.com/methodology**.

FREE SPEECH RANKINGS

The College Free Speech Rankings are based on a composite score of 14 components, seven of which assess student perceptions of different aspects of the speech climate on their campus. The other seven assess behavior by administrators, faculty, and students regarding free expression on campus. Higher scores indicate a better campus climate for free speech and expression.

Student Perceptions

The student perception components include:

- **Comfort Expressing Ideas:** Students were asked how comfortable they feel expressing their views on controversial topics in five different campus settings (e.g., "in class," or "in the dining hall"). Options ranged from "very uncomfortable" to "very comfortable." Responses were coded so that higher scores indicate greater comfort expressing ideas. The maximum number of points is 20.

- **Self-Censorship:** Students were provided with a definition of self-censorship and then asked how often they self-censored in three different settings on campus (e.g., "in a classroom discussion"). Responses were coded so that higher scores indicate self-censoring less often. The maximum number of points is 15.[2]

- **Tolerance for Liberal Speakers:** Students were asked whether three speakers espousing views potentially offensive to conservatives (e.g., "The police are just as racist as the Klu[*sic*] Klux Klan.") should be allowed on campus, regardless of whether they personally agree with the speaker's message. Options ranged from "definitely should not allow this speaker" to "definitely should allow

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2   The self-censorship component was introduced this year and is a composite score of responses to the three questions that are presented after self-censorship is defined. In previous years other questions were used to measure self-censorship and they were factored into the "Comfort Expressing Ideas" component.

this speaker" and were coded so that higher scores indicate more tolerance of the speaker (i.e., more support for allowing the speaker on campus). The maximum number of points is 12.

- **Tolerance for Conservative Speakers:** Students were also asked whether three speakers espousing views potentially offensive to liberals (e.g., "Black Lives Matter is a hate group") should be allowed on campus, regardless of whether they personally agree with the speaker's message. Scoring was performed in the same manner as it was for the "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers" subcomponent, and the maximum number of points is 12.

- **Disruptive Conduct:** Students were asked how acceptable it is to engage in different methods of protest against a campus speaker, including "shouting down a speaker or trying to prevent them from speaking on campus," "blocking other students from attending a campus speech," and "using violence to stop a campus speech." Options ranged from "always acceptable" to "never acceptable" and were coded so that higher scores indicate less acceptance of disruptive conduct. The maximum number of points is 12.

- **Administrative Support:** Students were asked how clear it is their administration protects free speech on campus and how likely the administration would be to defend a speaker's right to express their views if a controversy over speech occurred on campus. For the administrative clarity question, options range from "not at all clear" to "extremely clear," and for the administrative controversy question, options range from "not at all likely" to "extremely likely." Options were coded so that higher scores indicate greater clarity and a greater likelihood of defending a speaker's rights. The maximum number of points is 10.

- **Openness:** Finally, students were asked which of 20 issues (e.g., "abortion," "freedom of speech," "gun control," and "racial inequality"), if any, are difficult to have open conversations about on campus. Responses were coded so that higher scores indicate fewer issues being selected. The maximum number of points is 20.

Two additional constructs, "Mean Tolerance" and "Tolerance Difference," were computed from the "Tolerance for Liberal/Conservative Speaker" components. "Tolerance Difference" was calculated by subtracting "Tolerance for Conservative Speakers" from "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers" and then taking the absolute value (so that a bias in favor of either side would be treated the same).

Campus Behavioral Metrics

Schools received bonus points — described in more detail below — for unequivocally supporting free expression in response to speech controversies by taking the following actions indicative of a positive campus climate for free speech:

- Supporting free expression during a deplatforming campaign, as recorded in FIRE's Campus Deplatforming database.[3]

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3   A full list of all the deplatforming incidents that impacted the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings is available here: **https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1i5h8y1M4GFv5FQzyx6lLZqHj10Oa1YQJOYvozCqAzE8/edit?gid=1964386004#gid=1964386004**. The full Campus Deplatforming database is available on FIRE's website at **https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/campus-deplatforming-database**.

- Supporting a scholar whose speech rights were threatened during a free speech controversy, as recorded in FIRE's Scholars Under Fire database.[4]

- Supporting students and student groups, as recorded in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings behavioral metrics documentation that is available online.[5]

Schools were penalized — described in more detail below — for taking the following actions indicative of poor campus climate for free speech:

- Successfully deplatforming a speaker, as recorded in FIRE's Campus Deplatforming database.

- Sanctioning a scholar (e.g., placing under investigation, suspending, or terminating a scholar), as recorded in FIRE's Scholars Under Fire database.

- Sanctioning a student or student groups, as recorded in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings behavioral metrics documentation that is available online.

To be included in this year's rankings, an incident that resulted in a bonus or penalty had to have been recorded by June 15, 2024, and had to have been fully assessed by FIRE's research staff, who determined whether the incident warranted inclusion.

In response to the encampment protests, FIRE and College Pulse reopened the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings survey on any campus with an encampment. This allowed us to collect survey data from students while the encampments were taking place.[6] That means that this year's College Free Speech Rankings provide a treasure trove of data on the evolving state of free expression at American colleges and universities.

FIRE's Spotlight ratings — our ratings of the written policies governing student speech at nearly 500 institutions of higher education in the United States — also factored into each school's overall score. Three substantive ratings are possible: "red light," "yellow light," and "green light." A "red light" rating indicates that the institution has at least one policy that both clearly and substantially restricts freedom of speech. A "yellow light" rating indicates that an institution maintains at least one policy that places a clear restriction on a more limited amount of protected expression, or one that, by virtue of vague wording, could too easily be used to restrict protected expression. A "green light" rating indicates that an institution maintains no policies that seriously threaten speech, although this rating does not indicate whether a college actively supports free expression.[7]

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4   A full list of all the scholar sanction attempts that impacted the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings is available here: **https:// docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1i5h8y1M4GFv5FQzyx6lLZqHj1oOa1YQJOYvozCqAzE8/edit?gid=1204583933#gid=1204583933**. The full Scholars Under Fire database is available on FIRE's website at **https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/scholars-under-fire**.

5   All data reported in this section reflect the Students Under Fire database as of June 15, 2024. A full list of all the student sanction attempts that impacted the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings is available here: **https://docs.google.com/ spreadsheets/d/1i5h8y1M4GFv5FQzyx6lLZqHj1oOa1YQJOYvozCqAzE8/edit?gid=472255842#gid=472255842**. The full Students Under Fire database is currently internal to FIRE but will be released in full in early 2025.

6   Schools were not penalized for how they handled the encampment protests. As this report demonstrates, the impact of the encampment protests on the campus speech climate is captured by responses to survey questions that ask students about their confidence in that their college administration protects speech rights on campus; their comfort expressing controversial political views; and, their frequency of self-censorship. Deplatformings that occurred during the encampment protests were also still included in the calculation of the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings.

7   See: Using FIRE's Spotlight Database. Available online: **https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/using-fires-spotlight-database**.

Finally, a fourth rating, "Warning," is assigned to a private college or university when its policies clearly and consistently state that it prioritizes other values over a commitment to free speech. "Warning" schools, therefore, were not ranked, and their overall scores are presented separately in this report.[8]

For this year's rankings, the cutoff date for assessing a school's speech code policies was June 15, 2024. Any changes to a school's Spotlight rating that occurred since then will be reflected in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings.

Overall Score

To create an overall score for each college, we first summed the following student subcomponents: "Comfort Expressing Ideas," "Self-Censorship," "Mean Tolerance," "Disruptive Conduct," "Administrative Support," and "Openness." Then, we subtracted the "Tolerance Difference." By including the "Mean Tolerance" (as opposed to including "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers" and "Tolerance for Conservative Speakers" separately) and subtracting the "Tolerance Difference," the score accounted for the possibility that ideologically homogeneous student bodies may result in a campus that *appears* to have a strong culture of free expression but is actually hostile to the views of an ideological minority — whose views students may almost never encounter on campus.

Then, to further account for the speech climate on an individual campus, we incorporated behavioral components. A school earned two bonus points each time it unequivocally defended free expression during a campus speech controversy — a rating of "High Honors" for its public response to a speech controversy. For instance, when the student government at Arizona State University opposed a registered student group's invitation to Mohammed el-Kurd to speak on campus, and other members of the campus community petitioned the university to disinvite el-Kurd, a university spokesperson responded:

> *The university is committed to a safe environment where the free exchange of ideas can take place . . . As a public university, ASU adheres to the First Amendment and strives to ensure the fullest degree of intellectual freedom and free expression. All individuals and groups on campus have the right to express their opinions, whatever those opinions may be, as long as they do not violate the student code of conduct, student organization policies, and do not infringe on another student's individual rights.*

el-Kurd spoke successfully on campus, and we awarded ASU two bonus points.

A school earned one bonus point for responding to a speech controversy by making a public statement that strongly defends the First Amendment but is not as full-throated a defense as a "High Honors" statement. These statements received the rating of "Honors." For instance, at New York University, NYU Law Students for Palestine and Jewish Law Students for a Free Palestine called for the cancellation of an event featuring Robert Howse and Michal Cotler-Wunsh, because Cotler-Wunsh supports the occupation of Palestine. The event was co-sponsored by a student group, NYU's Jewish Law Students Association, as well as the president's office and the Bronfman Center for Jewish Life. NYU did not cancel the event, and protesters interrupted Cotler-Wunsh several times during his remarks before voluntarily leaving, allowing the event to resume and conclude successfully. The dean of the law school said the following in response:

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8   The Spotlight Database is available on FIRE's website: **https://www.thefire.org/resources/spotlight/**.

> *The principles of free speech and inquiry are complemented by debate, challenge and protest . . . While dissent may be vigorous, it must not interfere with the speaker's ability to communicate — which is exactly why, should those interrupters not have left on their own accord, they would be subject to discipline.*

We awarded one point for this response, which occurred in 2024, then we set this bonus to decrease by one-quarter of a point for each year that passes.

We also applied penalties when a school sanctioned a scholar, student, or student group, or deplatformed a speaker.

A school lost up to five points each time it sanctioned (e.g., investigated, suspended, or terminated) a scholar. When the sanction did not result in termination the school received a penalty of one point, which we set to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year: This meant penalizing a school a full point for sanctioning a scholar in 2024, three-quarters of a point for sanctioning a scholar in 2023, half a point for sanctioning a scholar in 2022, and one-quarter of a point for sanctioning a scholar in 2021. However, if the administration terminated the scholar, we subtracted three points, and if that scholar was tenured, we subtracted five points. We applied full penalties for termination for four years, then set them to decline by one-quarter of a point each year. So, a penalty for termination that occurred in 2020 has just now started to decay.

A school lost up to three points for sanctioning students or student groups. When the sanction did not result in expulsion, the revocation of acceptance, the denial or revoking of recognition, suspension, or termination of a student's campus employment (e.g, as a resident assistant) the school received a penalty of one point. Like with scholar sanctions that did not result in termination, we set these penalties to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year. If a school suspended a student or terminated their campus employment, we penalized it two points. We also set these penalties to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year. However, if a school denied or revoked a student group's recognition, expelled a student, or revoked their acceptance, it was penalized three points. We applied these penalties in full for four years, and then set them to decline by one-quarter of a point each year.

Regarding deplatforming attempts, a school was penalized one point if an invited speaker withdrew because of the controversy caused by their upcoming appearance on campus or if an event was postponed in response to a controversy. We set this penalty to decrease by a quarter of a point each year. Schools where an attempted disruption occurred received a penalty of two points. We applied this penalty for four years, then set it to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year. Schools with deplatforming attempts that resulted in event cancellations, preemptive rejections of speakers, removal of artwork on display, the revocation of a speaker's invitation, or a substantial event disruption were penalized three points. We applied these penalties in full for four years, then set them to decline by one-quarter of a point each year.

After we applied bonuses and penalties, we standardized each school's score by group — "Warning" schools and other schools — making the average score in each group 50.00 and the standard deviation 10.00. Following standardization, we added one standard deviation to the final score of colleges who received a "green light" rating for their speech codes. We also subtracted half a standard deviation from the final score of colleges that received a "yellow light" rating, one standard deviation from the final score of schools that received a "red light" rating, and two standard deviations from schools that received a "Warning" rating.

$$Overall\ Score = (50 + (Z_{Raw\ Overall\ Score})(10)) + FIRE\ Rating$$

Topline Results

How clear is it to you that your college administration protects free speech on campus?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not at all clear	11	5
Not very clear	29	14
Somewhat clear	106	51
Very clear	57	27
Extremely clear	6	3

If a controversy over offensive speech were to occur on your campus, how likely is it that the administration would defend the speaker's right to express their views?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not at all likely	10	5
Not very likely	48	23
Somewhat likely	100	48
Very likely	46	22
Extremely likely	5	2

How comfortable would you feel doing the following on your campus? [Presented in randomized order]

Publicly disagreeing with a professor about a controversial political topic.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	49	23
Somewhat uncomfortable	91	44
Somewhat comfortable	54	26
Very comfortable	15	7

Expressing disagreement with one of your professors about a controversial political topic in a written assignment.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	30	14
Somewhat uncomfortable	73	35
Somewhat comfortable	90	43
Very comfortable	16	7

Expressing your views on a controversial political topic during an in-class discussion.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	48	23
Somewhat uncomfortable	84	40
Somewhat comfortable	60	29
Very comfortable	17	8

Expressing your views on a controversial political topic to other students during a discussion in a common campus space such as a quad, dining hall, or lounge.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	39	19
Somewhat uncomfortable	83	40
Somewhat comfortable	69	33
Very comfortable	17	8

Expressing an unpopular political opinion to your fellow students on a social media account tied to your name.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	70	34
Somewhat uncomfortable	75	36
Somewhat comfortable	56	27
Very comfortable	8	4

On your campus, how often have you felt that you could not express your opinion on a subject because of how students, a professor, or the administration would respond?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	32	15
Rarely	81	39
Occasionally, once or twice a month	72	34
Fairly often, a couple times a week	16	8
Very often, nearly every day	9	4

This next series of questions asks you about self-censorship in different settings. For the purpose of these questions, self-censorship is defined as follows:

Refraining from sharing certain views because you fear social (e.g., exclusion from social events), professional (e.g., losing job or promotion), legal (e.g., prosecution or fine), or violent (e.g., assault) consequences, whether in person or remotely (e.g., by phone or online), and whether the consequences come from state or non-state sources. [Presented in randomized order]

How often do you self-censor during conversations with other students on campus?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	29	14
Rarely	75	36
Occasionally, once or twice a month	56	27
Fairly often, a couple times a week	40	19
Very often, nearly every day	9	4

How often do you self-censor during conversations with your professors?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	22	11
Rarely	60	29
Occasionally, once or twice a month	63	30
Fairly often, a couple times a week	53	25
Very often, nearly every day	10	5

How often do you self-censor during classroom discussions?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	20	9
Rarely	58	28
Occasionally, once or twice a month	82	39
Fairly often, a couple times a week	44	21
Very often, nearly every day	5	3

How acceptable would you say it is for students to engage in the following action to protest a campus speaker? [Presented in randomized order]

Shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always acceptable	8	4
Sometimes acceptable	46	22
Rarely acceptable	75	36
Never acceptable	80	38

Blocking other students from attending a campus speech.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always acceptable	4	2
Sometimes acceptable	35	17
Rarely acceptable	69	33
Never acceptable	101	49

Using violence to stop a campus speech.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always acceptable	7	3
Sometimes acceptable	28	13
Rarely acceptable	35	17
Never acceptable	140	67

Student groups often invite speakers to campus to express their views on a range of topics. Regardless of your own views on the topic, should your school **ALLOW** or **NOT ALLOW** a speaker on campus who promotes the following idea? [Presented in randomized order]

Transgender people have a mental disorder.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	72	34
Probably should not allow this speaker	83	40
Probably should allow this speaker	38	18
Definitely should allow this speaker	16	8

Abortion should be completely illegal.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	49	23
Probably should not allow this speaker	74	35
Probably should allow this speaker	63	30
Definitely should allow this speaker	23	11

Black Lives Matter is a hate group.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	85	41
Probably should not allow this speaker	78	37
Probably should allow this speaker	38	18
Definitely should allow this speaker	7	4

The Catholic church is a pedophilic institution.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	71	34
Probably should not allow this speaker	87	42
Probably should allow this speaker	44	21
Definitely should allow this speaker	8	4

The police are just as racist as the Klu Klux Klan.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	91	43
Probably should not allow this speaker	79	38
Probably should allow this speaker	35	17
Definitely should allow this speaker	4	2

Children should be able to transition without parental consent.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	55	26
Probably should not allow this speaker	99	47
Probably should allow this speaker	49	23
Definitely should allow this speaker	6	3

Collateral damage in Gaza is justified for the sake of Israeli security.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	56	27
Probably should not allow this speaker	89	43
Probably should allow this speaker	56	27
Definitely should allow this speaker	7	3

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	19	9
Probably should not allow this speaker	87	41
Probably should allow this speaker	86	41
Definitely should allow this speaker	18	8

Some students say it can be difficult to have conversations about certain issues on campus. Which of the following issues, if any, would you say are difficult to have an open and honest conversation about on your campus? [Presented in randomized order with none of the above always listed last]

Abortion

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	91	44
Yes	118	56

Affirmative action

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	157	75
Yes	52	25

China

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	186	89
Yes	23	11

Climate change

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	173	83
Yes	35	17

Crime

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	182	87
Yes	27	13

Economic inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	157	75
Yes	51	24

Freedom of speech

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	172	82
Yes	36	17

Gay rights

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	143	68
Yes	66	31

Gender inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	151	72
Yes	58	28

Gun control

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	135	65
Yes	74	35

Hate speech

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	158	76
Yes	51	24

Immigration

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	141	67
Yes	68	32

The Israeli/Palestinian conflict

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	115	55
Yes	94	45

The Presidential Election

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	123	59
Yes	85	41

Police misconduct

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	153	73
Yes	56	27

Racial inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	139	67
Yes	70	33

Religion

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	144	69
Yes	64	31

Sexual assault

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	150	72
Yes	59	28

The Supreme Court

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	188	90
Yes	21	10

Transgender rights

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	116	55
Yes	93	45

None of the above

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	176	84
Yes	32	15

Which of the following groups on your campus should be able to register as student organizations and receive student activity fees? [Presented in randomized order with none of the above always listed last]

Asian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	93	45
Yes	111	53

Black or African American student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	95	46
Yes	109	52

Hispanic/Latino student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	91	44
Yes	114	54

Sororities or fraternities

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	78	38
Yes	126	60

LGBTQ+ student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	88	42
Yes	117	56

Christian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	87	42
Yes	118	56

Jewish student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	90	43
Yes	115	55

Muslim/Islamic student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	96	46
Yes	109	52

Hindu student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	93	45
Yes	112	53

Atheist/agnostic/secular student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	117	56
Yes	87	42

Republican student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	111	53
Yes	94	45

Democratic student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	115	55
Yes	90	43

Politically conservative student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	114	54
Yes	91	43

Politically liberal student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	112	53
Yes	93	45

Black Lives Matter student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	99	47
Yes	106	50

Pro-Israeli student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	139	67
Yes	65	31

Pro-Palestinian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	133	64
Yes	72	34

Other student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	134	64
Yes	70	34

None of the above

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	160	77
Yes	45	21

How often, if at all, do you hide your political beliefs from your professors in an attempt to get a better grade?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	46	22
Rarely	69	33
Occasionally	51	24
Fairly often, a couple times a week	29	14
Very often, nearly every day	10	5

Have you ever been involved in publicly calling out, punishing, or "canceling" someone or a group for inappropriate statements or actions?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	27	13
No	178	85

Thinking of the last incident where someone was publicly called out, punished, or "canceled" for their statements or actions, would you say the consequence or impact on the person was. . .

Response	Frequency	Percent
Too lenient	24	12
About right	116	55
Too harsh	65	31

How often, if ever, have you personally been offended by perspectives shared by peers or classmates when in the classroom?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	57	27
Rarely	88	42
Occasionally	51	24
Fairly often, a couple times a week	7	3
Very often, nearly every day	2	1

From what you know about the situation in the Middle East, do your sympathies lie more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Israelis	24	11
Palestinians	35	17
Both equally	38	18
Neither	21	10
Don't know	87	42

Regardless of your overall feelings toward the Israelis and the Palestinians, who do you think is more responsible for the 2023 outbreak of violence in the Middle East: Israel or Hamas?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Israel	23	11
Hamas	54	26
Both equally	29	14
Don't know	98	47

How often do you attend church or religious services?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	25	12
Less than once a year	19	9
Once or twice a year	33	16
Several times a year	49	23
Once a month	14	7
2-3 times a month	19	9
About weekly	20	9
Weekly	26	13

Are you currently a member of the armed services?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	13	6
No	191	92

Are you a veteran of the armed services?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	6	3	3
No	199	95	97

How often would you say that you feel anxious?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	4	2	14
Less than half the time	11	5	35
About half the time	11	5	36
Most of the time, nearly every day	1	0	2
Always	4	2	12

How often would you say that you feel lonely or isolated?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	16	8	38
Less than half the time	17	8	40
About half the time	8	4	20
Most of the time, nearly every day	0	0	1

How often would you say that you feel like you have no time for yourself?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	3	2	7
Less than half the time	26	12	52
About half the time	11	5	22
Most of the time, nearly every day	9	5	19
Always	0	0	1

How often would you say that you feel depressed?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	15	7	36
Less than half the time	14	7	35
About half the time	7	3	17
Most of the time, nearly every day	4	2	9
Always	1	1	3

How often would you say that you feel stressed, frustrated, or overwhelmed?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	6	3	14
Less than half the time	8	4	20
About half the time	7	3	17
Most of the time, nearly every day	17	8	42
Always	3	1	7

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