2025 College Free Speech Rankings
Williams College

156
OVERALL
RANK

SLIGHTLY
BELOW
AVERAGE

SPEECH
CLIMATE

YELLOW

SPOTLIGHT
RATING

FIRE
Foundation for Individual
Rights and Expression

2025 College Free Speech Rankings
Williams College

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.

Williams College was one of the 257 schools surveyed. Key findings from this school include:

- A ranking of 156 overall, with an overall score of 43.97 and a "Slightly Below Average" speech climate.

- Among the other schools in the New England Small College Athletic Conference, Williams ranks near the bottom, coming in below Trinity (91), Hamilton (95), Bowdoin (98), Colby (110), Amherst (124), and Wesleyan (152), but ahead of Middlebury (177), Tufts (182), and Connecticut College (202).

- A strong performance on "Openness" (16) and "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers" (33).

- A mediocre performance on "Disruptive Conduct" (149), "Administrative Support" (188), and "Tolerance for Conservative Speakers" (193).

- A poor performance on "Comfort Expressing Ideas" (217) and "Tolerance Difference" (227).

- A penalty for a substantial event disruption of a round table discussion featuring Galen Jackson, Aaron David Miller, and Stephen Walt.

- If Williams College revised its speech policies that earn it a "yellow light" rating from FIRE to a "green light" rating, the college would have ranked 29 in this year's College Free Speech Rankings.

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] Williams College, with a score of 43.97, has a "Slightly Below Average" speech climate and ranks 156 overall in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings.

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

> *"Well, I don't know how to write some moments in words, but it's just that certain sense of unease about being able to freely talk about what's on your mind is present in the classroom environment that makes it difficult to get all things on your mind through. That might be just normal human hesitation of expressing an unpopular opinion in a crowd that might or might not agree with one's views."*

> *"In general, I am paranoid of being overheard and misunderstood when I speak my opinion. I am worried people will frame me as a specific type of person if I were to disagree with them."*

Williams ranks 217 on the "Comfort Expressing Ideas."

Fewer than half of Williams students are "very" or "somewhat" comfortable expressing their views on controversial political topics in each of the five contexts asked about: publicly disagreeing with a professor, privately disagreeing with a professor, in the classroom, on campus, and on social media.

Williams students are more comfortable expressing disagreement with their professors. About half are "very" or "somewhat" comfortable publicly disagreeing with a professor on a controversial political topic (48%) or doing so in a written assignment (46%). In contrast:

- More than a third of Williams students (37%) are "very" or "somewhat" comfortable expressing controversial political views during an in-class discussion.

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1   Six of the schools surveyed received a "warning" rating from FIRE for their speech policies because they clearly and consistently state that they hold a certain set of values above a commitment to freedom of speech. An overall score was calculated separately for these schools, comparing them only to each other.

- About two-fifths of Williams students (39%) are "very" or "somewhat" comfortable expressing controversial political views to other students during a discussion in a common campus space like the dining hall.

- Almost one-fifth of Williams students (18%) are "very" or "somewhat" comfortable expressing an unpopular political opinion to their fellow students on a social media account tied to their name.

HOW OFTEN ARE WILLIAMS STUDENTS SELF-CENSORING ON CAMPUS?

Williams ranks 79 on "Self-Censorship."

Less than a third of Williams students self-censor "very" or "fairly" often in conversations with their professors (28%) and during classroom discussions (27%), and one-fifth self-censor "very" or "fairly" often during conversations with other students on campus.

On a positive note, the percentage of Williams students who say that they "very" or "fairly" often have felt that they could not express their opinion on a subject because of how students, a professor, or the administration would respond has consistently declined over the past four years.

FIGURE 1 Students Who Self-Censor Fairly of Very Often (%)
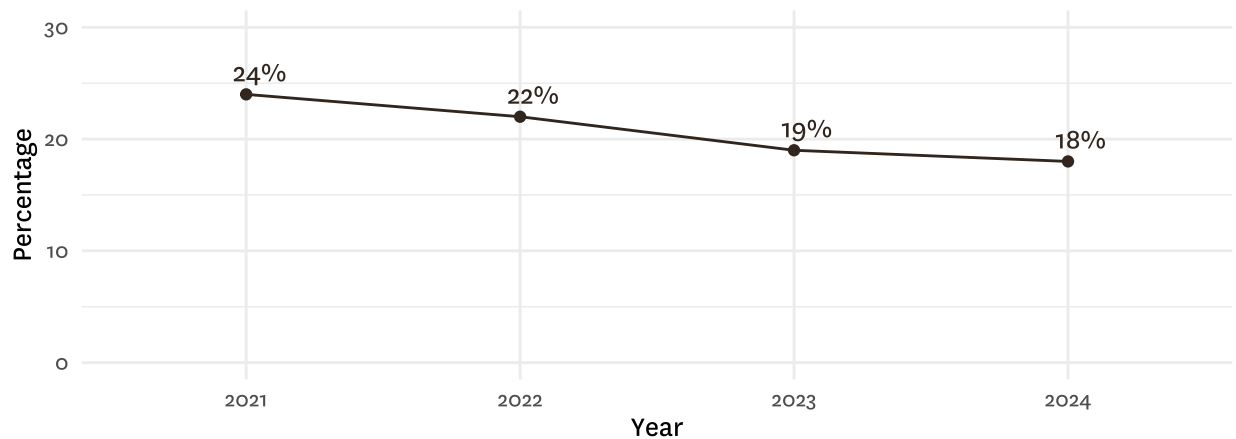
WHAT TOPICS ARE DIFFICULT FOR WILLIAMS STUDENTS TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT?

Williams ranks 16 on "Openness."

Roughly three-fifths of Williams students (59%) say the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a difficult topic to have an open and honest conversation about on campus, up from 44% last year.

No other topic was identified as difficult to discuss by more than a third of Williams students. This is an improvement over last year when more than a third of students identified affirmative action (40%), immigration (41%), racial inequality (38%), and sexual assault (38%) as difficult to discuss.

## WHICH SPEAKERS DO WILLIAMS STUDENTS CONSIDER CONTROVERSIAL?

> *"Everyone acts like it is an empirical fact that every institution in the US is inherently racist and anti-Black. Any idea that questions this is a no-go."*

Williams ranks 33 on "Tolerance for Liberal Speakers," 109 on "Mean Tolerance," 193 on "Tolerance for Conservative Speakers," and 227 on the "Tolerance Difference" component.

Williams students favor allowing controversial liberal speakers on campus over controversial conservative ones. Over half of Williams students say that all three of the controversial liberal speakers asked about should "definitely" or "probably" be allowed on campus, including roughly two-thirds (68%) who say this about someone who said "children should be able to transition without parental consent."

In contrast, one-fifth of Williams students say that someone who said "transgender people have a mental disorder" (19%) or someone who said "Black Lives Matter is a hate group" (21%) should "definitely" or "probably" be allowed on campus. Just over a third (36%) say this about someone who said "abortion should be completely illegal."[2]

FIGURE 2 Students Who Support Allowing Each Controversial Speaker on Campus (%)
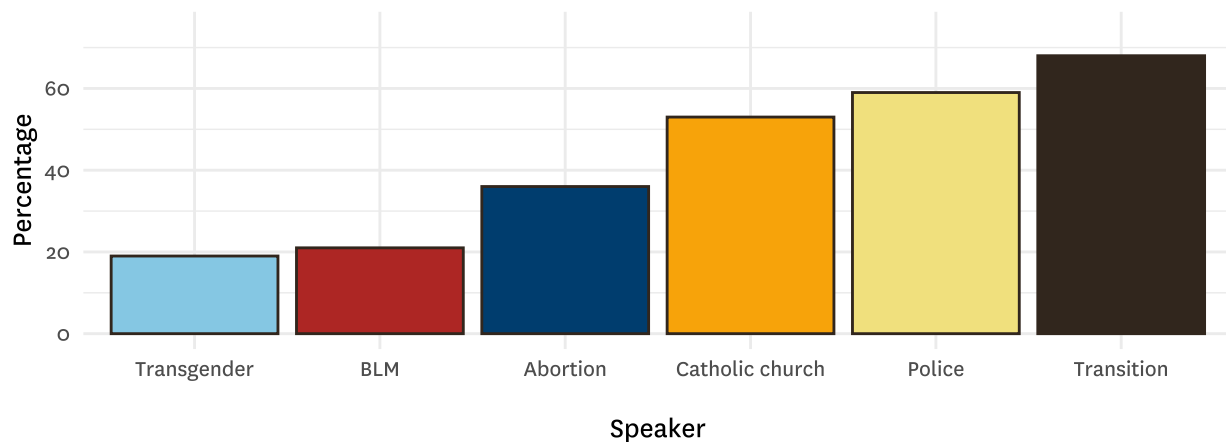
The liberal:conservative ratio among the student body is 3:1, and, as evidenced by the rank of 227 on "Tolerance Difference," the students possess a clear ideological bias that favors the expression of liberal ideas and discourages the expression of conservative ones. This helps explain how the college ranks very

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2   The other two controversial liberal speakers said: "The Catholic church is a pedophilic institution" and "The police are just as racist as the Ku Klux Klan."

well on openness, reasonably well on self-censorship, and has seen the frequency of self-censorship decline year over year, yet ranks relatively poorly overall.

Additionally, 34% of Williams students say that someone who said that "collateral damage in Gaza is justified for the sake of Israeli security" should "definitely" or "probably" be allowed on campus. In contrast, 72% of Williams students say that someone who said "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" should "definitely" or "probably" be allowed on campus.[3]

WHAT KINDS OF DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT DO WILLIAMS STUDENTS CONSIDER ACCEPTABLE?

Williams ranks 149 "Disruptive Conduct."

Roughly three-quarters of Williams students (74%) say that shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is at least "rarely" acceptable, and almost three-fifths (58%) say that blocking other students from attending a campus speech is at least "rarely" acceptable. For students nationally, these percentages are 68% and 52%, respectively. Additionally, 29% of Williams students say that using violence to stop a campus speech is at least "rarely" acceptable, compared to 32% of students nationally.

HOW IS WILLIAMS ADMINISTRATIVE STANCE ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH PERCEIVED?

> *"When pro Palestine information is posted around school and is then defaced, nothing is said. When pro Israel information is, administration/Maud writes a serious email and causes those who defaced it as antisemitic."*

Williams ranks 188 on "Administrative Support."

Roughly a quarter of Williams students say it is "extremely" or "very" clear that the college administration protects free speech on campus, while 35% say it is "not at all" or "not very" clear. This contrasts with how students nationally feel: 34% say it is "extremely" or "very" clear that the administration protects free speech on campus while 24% say it is "not at all" or "not very" clear.

About a fifth of Williams students (17%) say it is "extremely" or "very" likely that the administration would defend a speaker's rights during a controversy over offensive speech on campus, while about a third (32%) say it is "not at all" or "not very" likely.

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3   These two questions do not impact a school's overall score or its position in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings.

A 'YELLOW' LIGHT SCHOOL WITH SOME CONTROVERSY

FIRE awards Williams's regulations on student expression a "yellow light" rating, flagging seven policies that earn that rating for posing either impermissibly vague or clear but narrow restrictions on protected speech. These include a policy that prohibits student organizations from using funds for activities the university deems "offensive to the community;" a policy requiring that all demonstrations first receive approval from administrators; a posting policy that does not allow individuals to post flyers anonymously; a harassment policy that does not sufficiently track the legal standard for peer harassment in an educational setting; an overbroad use of computers policy; and a chilling bias incident reporting policy.

Perhaps of greatest concern is a provision in Williams's Code of Conduct that proclaims that membership in the campus community requires students to "behave with courtesy to others." These sorts of mandates on civility can all too easily be applied by administrators to punish disfavored speech. While Williams may hope that its students treat each other with courtesy and should provide students with the tools to learn how to engage respectfully in civil dialogues on campus, the administration cannot punish students for merely saying something they subjectively deem discourteous. Williams must revise all of these policies to reduce the chilling effect they impose on the campus speech climate.

If Williams modified its speech policies to obtain a "green light" rating, it would rank 28 in this year's College Free Speech Rankings, with an overall score of 58.97.

This past spring, student protesters affiliated with Students for Justice in Palestine interrupted a round-table discussion between Aaron David Miller, and Stephen Walt, moderated by Galen Jackson. The protesters loudly chanted slogans over the panelists such as "resistance is justified when people are occupied," "long live Palestine," and "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free." The protesters left the event after a few minutes (and after Jackson informed them they were violating college policy) and the event resumed. About 15 to 20 minutes later during the Q&A, a student read a question and then started chanting over the panelists with another student before the panelists could respond. As the students continued chanting, the college president walked to the stage and spoke with Jackson. Jackson then announced the event was ending early and the two students chanting walked onto the stage and stood in front of the panelists. This incident negatively impacted Williams's overall score and ranking this year.

In a campus wide email after the event disruption, the college president said:

> *Williams College has clear policies regarding protest, the boundaries of which are notably wide to allow for the open exchange of ideas and the expression of dissent. Those interested in questioning the assumptions or perspectives of a speaker are invited to do so. Throughout this lecture series, many attendees participated by listening to our invited speakers and respectfully asking questions, even when they disagreed with the content. Members of our community are also invited to host their own events, showcasing alternative views. Shouting down speakers is, however, a direct violation of one of the tenets we hold most dear–the ability to learn, question, and critically engage with each other openly. This serious transgression, the "heckler's veto," strikes at the heart of the academic project; it is, therefore, a significant violation of our principles.*
>
> *I deeply regret that students opted to engage in disruptive behavior last night, and the matter will be referred to the College's standard disciplinary process.*

Our protest policies are intended to promote free expression and debate while preventing harassment, ensuring everyone's safety, and allowing for the continued functioning of the College. I ask everyone in our community to respect these guidelines even as we voice our deepest convictions.

HOW CAN WILLIAMS IMPROVE?

The easiest thing Williams can do to improve its rating in next year's College Free Speech Rankings is to revise its seven yellow light speech policies. These include a policy that prohibits student organizations from using funds for activities the university deems "offensive to the community," a policy requiring that all demonstrations first receive approval from administrators, a posting policy that does not allow individuals to post flyers anonymously, a harassment policy that does not sufficiently track the legal standard for peer harassment in an educational setting, an overbroad use of computers policy, and a chilling bias incident reporting policy.

Revising these policies in full public view, with a push to make students aware of these changes, might signal that Williams is starting a new chapter, one where it unequivocally supports freedom of speech and is poised to defend it when controversy arises. Such revisions might also be a helpful way to communicate what activities and behaviors are acceptable for protest and which are not.

Still, obtaining a green light rating does not 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 quickly change year-to-year due to student turnover. The proof of whether a school truly supports free expression as a core value is revealed when that core value is inevitably tested by controversy, a test Williams recently failed when it allowed protesters to disrupt a panel discussion with a "heckler's veto."

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.[4]

- **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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4   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.[5]

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5   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.[6]

- Supporting students and student groups, as recorded in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings behavioral metrics documentation that is available online.[7]

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.[8] 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.[9]

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6   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**.

7   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.

8   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.

9   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.[10]

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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10   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	5	5
Not very clear	31	30
Somewhat clear	41	40
Very clear	15	15
Extremely clear	11	11

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	6	6
Not very likely	26	26
Somewhat likely	52	51
Very likely	12	11
Extremely likely	6	6

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	25	25
Somewhat uncomfortable	28	28
Somewhat comfortable	36	36
Very comfortable	12	12

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	19	19
Somewhat uncomfortable	35	35
Somewhat comfortable	33	33
Very comfortable	14	13

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	29	29
Somewhat uncomfortable	36	35
Somewhat comfortable	20	20
Very comfortable	17	17

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	24	24
Somewhat uncomfortable	38	37
Somewhat comfortable	30	29
Very comfortable	10	10

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	44	43
Somewhat uncomfortable	40	39
Somewhat comfortable	12	12
Very comfortable	6	6

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	14	14
Rarely	35	34
Occasionally, once or twice a month	35	34
Fairly often, a couple times a week	15	15
Very often, nearly every day	3	3

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	12	11
Rarely	39	38
Occasionally, once or twice a month	31	30
Fairly often, a couple times a week	19	19
Very often, nearly every day	2	1

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	15	15
Rarely	33	32
Occasionally, once or twice a month	25	24
Fairly often, a couple times a week	17	17
Very often, nearly every day	12	11

How often do you self-censor during classroom discussions?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	14	14
Rarely	33	32
Occasionally, once or twice a month	27	27
Fairly often, a couple times a week	23	22
Very often, nearly every day	5	5

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	12	12
Sometimes acceptable	30	29
Rarely acceptable	33	33
Never acceptable	27	26

Blocking other students from attending a campus speech.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always acceptable	4	4
Sometimes acceptable	13	13
Rarely acceptable	42	41
Never acceptable	43	42

Using violence to stop a campus speech.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Sometimes acceptable	15	15
Rarely acceptable	14	14
Never acceptable	72	71

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	45	45
Probably should not allow this speaker	36	36
Probably should allow this speaker	8	8
Definitely should allow this speaker	11	11

Abortion should be completely illegal.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	28	28
Probably should not allow this speaker	36	36
Probably should allow this speaker	24	24
Definitely should allow this speaker	13	12

Black Lives Matter is a hate group.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	38	37
Probably should not allow this speaker	41	41
Probably should allow this speaker	12	12
Definitely should allow this speaker	10	9

The Catholic church is a pedophilic institution.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	16	16
Probably should not allow this speaker	31	31
Probably should allow this speaker	37	37
Definitely should allow this speaker	16	16

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	9	9
Probably should not allow this speaker	32	31
Probably should allow this speaker	37	36
Definitely should allow this speaker	23	23

Children should be able to transition without parental consent.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	7	7
Probably should not allow this speaker	25	24
Probably should allow this speaker	47	46
Definitely should allow this speaker	23	22

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	26	25
Probably should not allow this speaker	36	35
Probably should allow this speaker	24	23
Definitely should allow this speaker	12	11

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	3	3
Probably should not allow this speaker	25	25
Probably should allow this speaker	38	37
Definitely should allow this speaker	36	35

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	73	72
Yes	24	23

Affirmative action

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	77	76
Yes	20	20

China

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	79	77
Yes	18	18

Climate change

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	93	91
Yes	5	4

Crime

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	91	89
Yes	6	6

Economic inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	83	81
Yes	14	14

Freedom of speech

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	77	75
Yes	20	20

Gay rights

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	85	83
Yes	12	12

Gender inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	80	78
Yes	17	17

Gun control

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	74	73
Yes	23	22

Hate speech

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	76	75
Yes	21	21

Immigration

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	84	82
Yes	14	13

The Israeli/Palestinian conflict

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	37	37
Yes	60	59

The Presidential Election

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	82	81
Yes	15	15

Police misconduct

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	83	81
Yes	14	14

Racial inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	64	63
Yes	33	33

Religion

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	72	71
Yes	25	24

Sexual assault

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	69	67
Yes	29	28

The Supreme Court

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	90	89
Yes	7	7

Transgender rights

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	68	67
Yes	29	29

None of the above

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	87	85
Yes	10	10

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	29	28
Yes	69	67

Black or African American student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	26	25
Yes	71	70

Hispanic/Latino student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	27	27
Yes	70	68

Sororities or fraternities

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	70	68
Yes	27	27

LGBTQ+ student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	25	24
Yes	73	71

Christian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	22	21
Yes	75	74

Jewish student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	24	24
Yes	73	72

Muslim/Islamic student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	21	21
Yes	76	75

Hindu student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	21	21
Yes	76	74

Atheist/agnostic/secular student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	38	37
Yes	59	58

Republican student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	39	39
Yes	58	57

Democratic student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	39	38
Yes	58	57

Politically conservative student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	38	37
Yes	59	58

Politically liberal student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	39	38
Yes	58	57

Black Lives Matter student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	32	32
Yes	65	64

Pro-Israeli student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	53	52
Yes	45	44

Pro-Palestinian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	40	39
Yes	57	56

Other student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	42	41
Yes	55	54

None of the above

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	96	94
Yes	1	1

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	30	29
Rarely	33	33
Occasionally	24	23
Fairly often, a couple times a week	8	8
Very often, nearly every day	3	3

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	8	8
No	88	86

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	10	10
About right	51	50
Too harsh	36	36

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

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	10	10
Rarely	40	39
Occasionally	36	36
Fairly often, a couple times a week	8	8
Very often, nearly every day	2	2

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	1	1
Palestinians	58	57
Both equally	21	21
Neither	2	2
Don't know	14	14

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	31	30
Hamas	23	22
Both equally	19	19
Don't know	25	24

How often do you attend church or religious services?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	49	48
Less than once a year	5	5
Once or twice a year	10	9
Several times a year	15	15
Once a month	4	3
2-3 times a month	3	3
About weekly	2	2
Weekly	8	7
Several times a week	2	2

Are you currently a member of the armed services?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1	1
No	95	93

Are you a veteran of the armed services?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
No	96	94	100

How often would you say that you feel anxious?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	3	3	23
Less than half the time	5	5	35
About half the time	2	2	17
Most of the time, nearly every day	1	1	10
Always	2	2	15

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

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	3	3	15
Less than half the time	10	9	48
About half the time	6	6	33
Most of the time, nearly every day	1	1	4

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

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	0	0	2
Less than half the time	8	7	34
About half the time	9	9	42
Most of the time, nearly every day	5	5	21

How often would you say that you feel depressed?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	13	13	43
Less than half the time	11	11	35
About half the time	3	3	11
Always	3	3	11

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

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	1	1	10
Less than half the time	1	1	13
About half the time	5	5	45
Most of the time, nearly every day	1	1	12
Always	2	2	19

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