

2026 College Free Speech Rankings

The Claremont Colleges

	OVERALL RANK	SPEECH CLIMATE	SPOTLIGHT RATING
Claremont McKenna College	1	B-	GREEN
Harvey Mudd College	193	F	YELLOW
Pitzer College	218	F	YELLOW
Pomona College	247	F	YELLOW
Scripps College	209	F	YELLOW

Executive Summary

THE COLLEGE FREE SPEECH RANKINGS are the most comprehensive comparison of free speech climates at U.S. colleges and universities. Developed by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, the rankings combine student survey data, written speech policies, and school responses to recent speech-related controversies to evaluate how well institutions uphold free expression. Schools earn higher scores when they protect open debate and viewpoint diversity and lose points when they restrict it.

To understand the student experience of free speech on campus, our survey partner, College Pulse, surveyed 68,510 student respondents from 257 colleges and universities from Jan. 3 through June 5, 2025. The College Free Speech Rankings are available online (rankings.thefire.org) for easy comparison between institutions.

We surveyed a total of 652 students at the five Claremont Colleges. Key findings include:

- The five Claremont Colleges obtained an average overall score of 59.14.
- Claremont McKenna ranks 1 with a B- speech climate grade. The school ranks in the top 10 overall on six components or subcomponents of the rankings — “Comfort Expressing Ideas,” “Administrative Support,” “Openness,” “Mean Tolerance,” “Self-Censorship,” and “Tolerance of Liberal Speakers.”
- Pomona has the lowest overall score (49.11) and ranking (247) of the five Claremont colleges. Pomona ranks poorly on many of the student survey components and subcomponents, including “Political Tolerance” (250), “Disruptive Conduct” (253), and “Administrative Support” (255).
- On a positive note, Claremont students can openly discuss a range of topics.
- A few speech controversies involving expression about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 2024 negatively impacted the rankings of Harvey Mudd, Pitzer, and Pomona. These controversies include the disruption of multiple alumni weekend events.

Claremont McKenna College (CMC) continues its reign as the best of the five Claremont Colleges for freedom of speech, rising to rank 1 this year after ranking 6 overall last year.¹ It is the only school overall that received a Climate Grade higher than a C+, receiving a B-.

FIGURE 1: Claremont Schools' Overall Rankings



Chart: Emily Nayyer • Source: College Pulse/ FIRE

CLAREMONT STUDENTS CAN OPENLY DISCUSS A RANGE OF TOPICS

All of the Claremont schools performed well on the “Openness” component.

TABLE 1: “Openness” Rankings of Claremont Colleges

SCHOOL	“OPENING” RANKING
CMC	7
Harvey Mudd	14
Pitzer	15
Pomona	8
Scripps	12

However, 82% of students at Scripps reported it being difficult to have an open and honest conversation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Eighty-one percent of students at Pomona reported the same, as did 70% at Harvey Mudd, 68% at Pitzer, and 57% at CMC.

¹ The detailed methodology can be found at rankings.thefire.org/methodology.

WHERE DO THE CLAREMONT SCHOOLS NEED IMPROVEMENT?

Low tolerance for conservative speakers

We asked students whether three speakers with views potentially offensive to conservatives and three speakers with views potentially offensive to liberals should be allowed on campus, regardless of whether the students personally agree with the speakers' messages. All five Claremont schools performed well on "Tolerance of Liberal Speakers" but poorly on "Tolerance Difference." Claremont McKenna College was the only Claremont school that performed well on "Mean Tolerance" and "Tolerance of Conservative Speakers:"

TABLE 2: Political Tolerance Rankings and Subcomponents of Claremont Schools

	POLITICAL TOLERANCE	TOLERANCE OF CONSERVATIVE SPEAKERS	TOLERANCE OF LIBERAL SPEAKERS	MEAN TOLERANCE	TOLERANCE DIFFERENCE
CMC	58	24	10	7	186
Harvey Mudd	229	208	47	126	234
Pitzer	251	249	9	104	253
Pomona	250	248	12	102	252
Scripps	252	253	32	189	250

CMC has one of the highest rankings on "Tolerance of Conservative Speakers," so their low ranking on "Tolerance Difference" is somewhat illusory — they are more tolerant than most campuses of conservatives, but they are even more tolerant of liberals. CMC's low ranking on "Tolerance Difference" is mostly explained by the ideological makeup of its student body, where liberal students outnumber conservatives by roughly a four-to-one ratio. But a closer look reveals that this score is not driven by hostility toward conservative speakers. Rather, CMC students exhibit unusually high tolerance for controversial liberal speakers, with a score of 9.89 — nearly two standard deviations above the national average of 8.31.

Students at CMC showed the most support for allowing a speaker on campus who made the conservative statement "abortion should be completely illegal." In fact, students have demonstrated an increase in support since 2021, going from 55% in 2021 to 61% this year.

FIGURE 2: Students Who Think That a Speaker Who Said “Abortion Should Be Completely Illegal” Should Be Allowed on Campus (%)

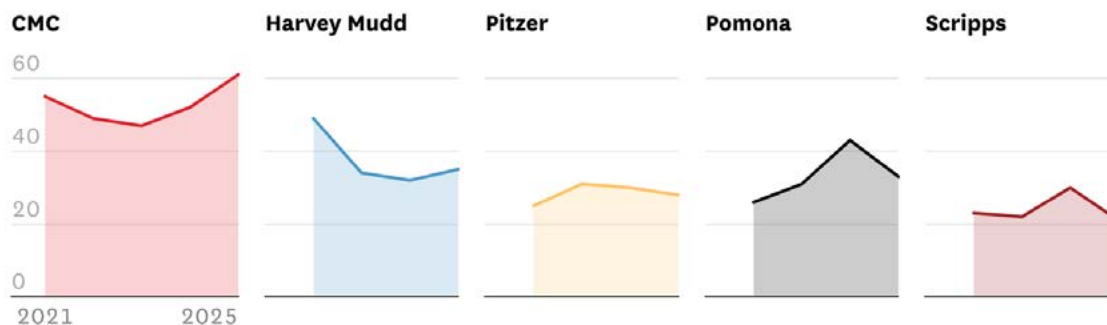


Chart: Emily Nayyer · Source: College Pulse/FIRE

On the other hand, students at Scripps College showed the least support for allowing a speaker on campus who made any of the conservative statements, especially for “transgender people have a mental disorder,” with only 8% at least somewhat in support. Harvey Mudd, Pitzer, and Pomona college students also all showed low percentages of support for conservative speakers, specifically for a speaker who said “Black Lives Matter is a hate group” and for a speaker who said “transgender people have a mental disorder.”

FIGURE 3: Students Who Think That a Speaker Who Said “Black Lives Matter Is A Hate Group” Should Be Allowed on Campus (%)

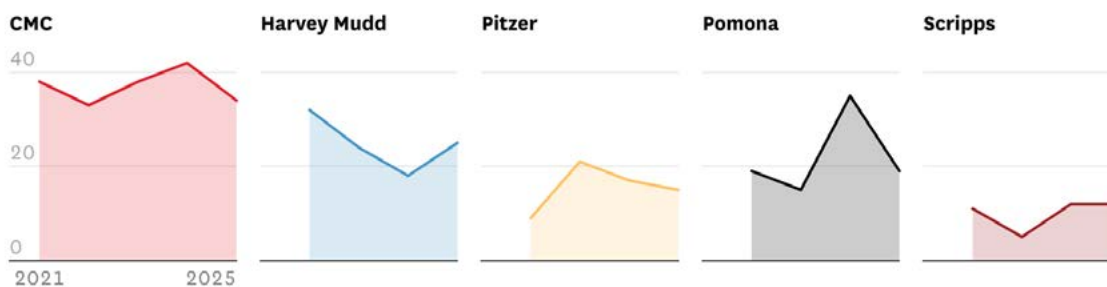


Chart: Emily Nayyer · Source: College Pulse/FIRE

FIGURE 4: Students Who Think That a Speaker Who Said “Transgender People Have A Mental Disorder” Should Be Allowed on Campus (%)

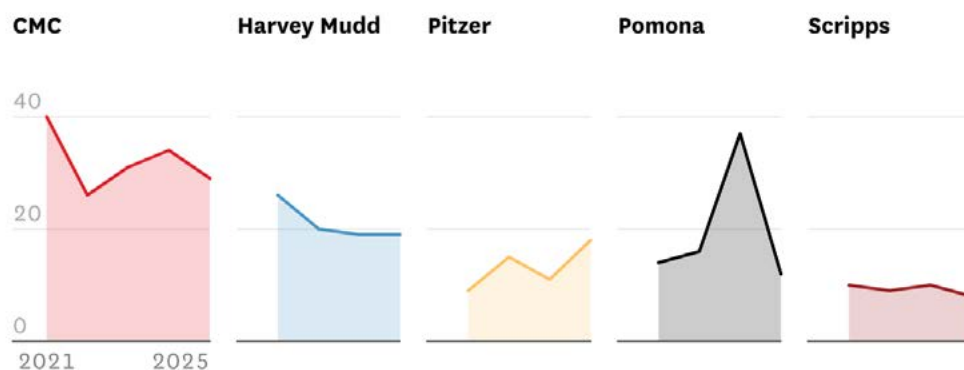


Chart: Emily Nayyer • Source: College Pulse/FIRE

Nationally, 26% of students reported that a speaker who said “transgender people have a mental disorder” should be allowed on campus while 40% said the same about a speaker who said “abortion should be completely illegal.” Twenty-four percent said the same about a speaker who said “Black Lives Matter is a hate group.”

High acceptance of disrupting speakers

Harvey Mudd, Pitzer, Pomona, and Scripps all performed poorly on the “Disruptive Conduct” component.

TABLE 3: “Disruptive Conduct” Rankings of Claremont Colleges

“DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT” RANKING	
CMC	39
Harvey Mudd	210
Pitzer	254
Pomona	253
Scripps	146

Compared to the other Claremont McKenna schools, Pomona and Scripps had the highest percentages of students (82%) who reported that shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is at least “rarely” acceptable. Nationally, 72% of students reported that it is at least “rarely” acceptable to shout down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus.

Scripps had the lowest percentage of students who said using violence to stop a campus speech was at least “rarely” acceptable (22%). Nationally, 34% of students reported that using violence to stop a campus speech was at least “rarely” acceptable.

FIGURE 5: Students Who Said the Following Disruptive Conducts are at Least Rarely Acceptable (%)

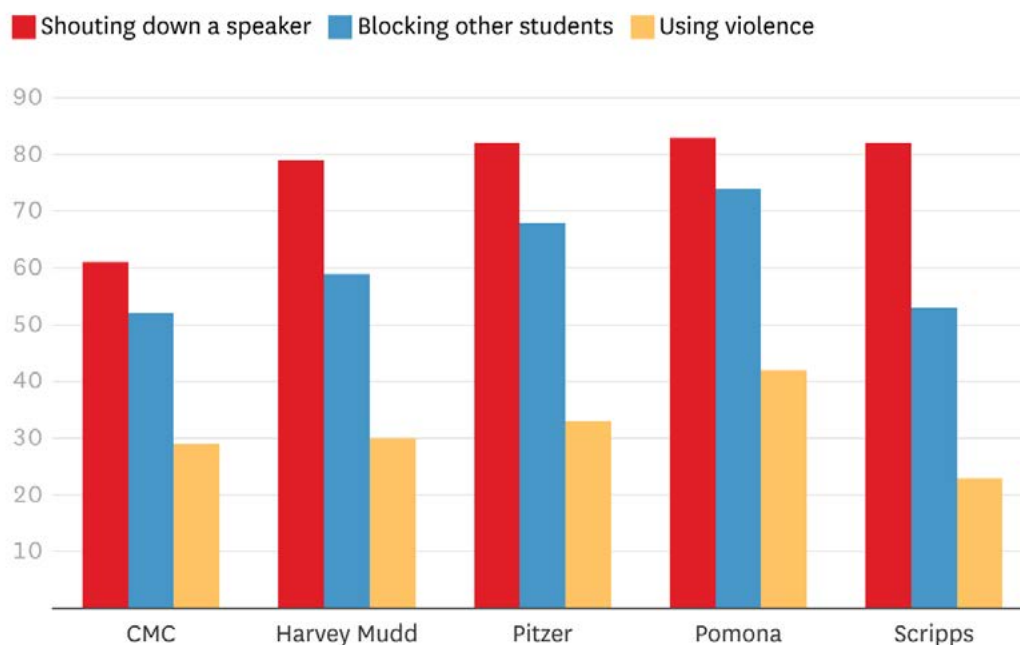


Chart: Emily Nayyer • Source: College Pulse/FIRE

Students doubt administrative support

Harvey Mudd, Pomona, and Scripps all performed poorly on the “Administrative Support” component. Compared to the other Claremont schools, students at CMC reported the highest percentages of administrative support — 67% of students at CMC reported that it is “very” or “extremely” clear that their college administration protects free speech on campus and 51% reported that if a controversy over offensive speech were to occur on their campus, it is “very” or “extremely” likely that the administration would defend the speaker’s right to express their views.

Conversely, Pomona had the lowest percentage of administrative support — 13% of students at Pomona reported that it was “very” or “extremely” clear that their college administration protects free speech on campus and 12% reported that if a controversy over offensive speech were to occur on their campus, it would have been “very” or “extremely” likely that the administration would have defended the speaker’s right to express their views.

FIGURE 6: Students Who View Their School's Administration As Supportive Of Free Speech (%)

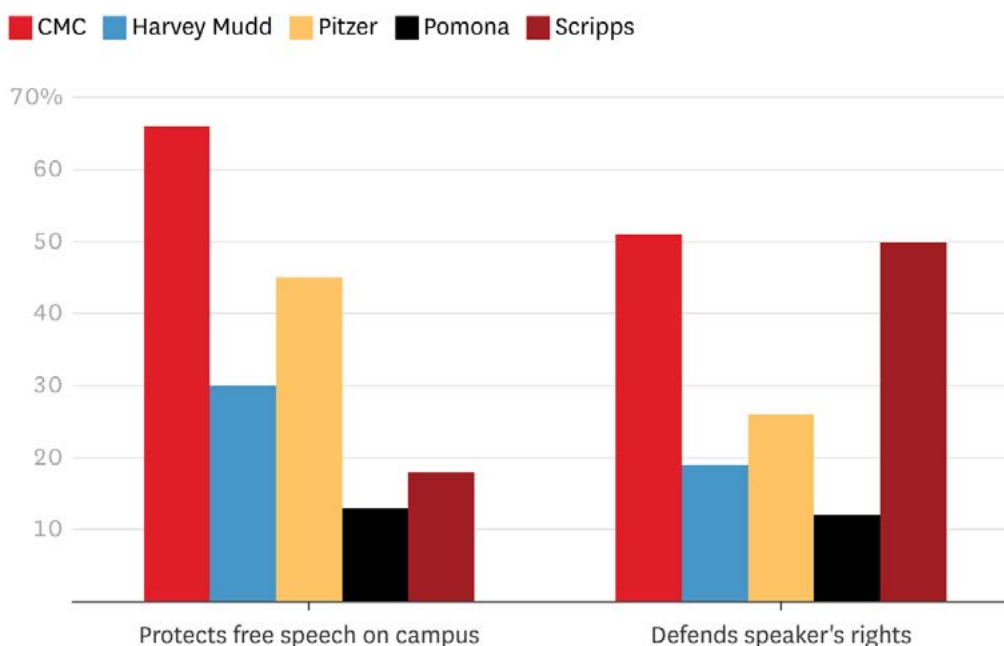


Chart: Emily Nayyer • Source: College Pulse/FIRE

Nationally, 36% of students reported that their college administration protects free speech on campus while 24% reported that if a controversy over offensive speech were to occur on campus, the administration would defend the speaker's right to express their views.

Students are uncomfortable expressing ideas

Both Pomona and Scripps performed poorly on the "Comfort Expressing Ideas" component.

Compared to the other Claremont colleges, Scripps had the lowest rates of students who were comfortable expressing ideas in the classroom, on campus, and on social media. Scripps' highest percentage was 50% of students who reported being comfortable expressing their 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.

Pomona had slightly higher percentages to report, with the highest being 62% of students who felt comfortable expressing their 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. It did, however, have the lowest percentage of students out of all the Claremont McKenna schools surveyed who felt comfortable expressing an unpopular opinion to their fellow students on a social media account tied to their name (21%).

MOSTLY ‘YELLOW LIGHT’ SCHOOLS WITH NO COMMITMENTS

Claremont McKenna College has a “green light” Spotlight rating and commitments to both the “Chicago Statement” and institutional neutrality. But every other school in Claremont holds a “yellow light” rating and none have adopted the Chicago Statement or made an official commitment to institutional neutrality.

CMC earns an overall green light rating for its written policies governing student expression. The institution maintains policies on posting, technology usage, harassment, and expressive activity that do not imperil free speech of students on campus. It is noteworthy that Claremont McKenna opts to follow their own advertising policy, rejecting the restrictive posting policy of the Consortium. The university is also governed by two harassment policies that earn yellow light ratings but do not compromise Claremont McKenna’s overall green light rating. This limited exception allows a school to earn an overall green light rating if it maintains harassment policies that comply with the 2024 Title IX regulations, but deviate from FIRE’s recommended harassment standard as articulated in *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education*.

Harvey Mudd College earns an overall yellow light rating for its written policies governing student expression. The university maintains seven yellow light policies and three green light policies. None of the university’s three harassment policies meet the legal standard for peer hostile environment harassment in an educational setting, putting protected speech that does not reach that threshold at risk. The university also broadly defines “bullying,” opening up a wider range of protected speech to punishment. Any expression the university wishes to prohibit under the “bullying” banner would best be categorized as hostile environmental harassment and governed under those policies.

Expressive activities are further curtailed by Harvey Mudd’s compliance with the Claremont Consortium’s restrictive posting policy, which requires campus postings to receive prior administrative approval and forbids anonymous authorship. The policy also asks students to refrain from expressing certain viewpoints, granting administrators broad discretion over campus speech and resulting in the suppression of a wide range of protected expression.

Finally, Harvey Mudd encourages students to report “bias-related incidents” to the administration and states it will evaluate protected speech and expressive conduct in relation to “the community’s values.” The administration should focus its resources on reports of discrimination and harassment and refrain from soliciting reports of subjective bias.

Pitzer College earns an overall yellow light rating for its written policies governing student expression. The university maintains six yellow light policies and three green light policies. Three of the university’s four harassment policies fail to meet the legal standard for peer hostile environment harassment in an educational setting, putting protected speech that does not reach that threshold at risk. Pitzer’s computer usage policy also bans the messaging of broad categories of speech, such as “abusive messages,” subjecting a wide range of protected expression to punishment.

Expressive activities are further curtailed by Pitzer’s compliance with the Claremont Consortium’s restrictive posting policy, which requires campus postings to receive prior administrative approval and forbids anonymous authorship. The policy also asks students to refrain from expressing certain viewpoints, granting administrators broad discretion over campus speech and resulting in the suppression of a wide range of protected expression. It is noteworthy that Pitzer has its own accompanying posting policy, which reaffirms the need for prior administrative approval for all materials.

Pomona College earns an overall yellow light rating for its written policies governing student expression. The university maintains five yellow light policies and two green light policies. Two of Pomona's three harassment policies fail to meet the legal standard for peer hostile environment harassment in an educational setting, putting protected speech that does not reach that threshold at risk. Furthermore, the institution's internet usage policy subjects a wide range of protected expression to punishment by banning all "unsolicited mail," which could include an innocuous invitation to join a new student group or even an email sent by mistake.

Expressive activities are further curtailed by Pomona's compliance with the Claremont Consortium's restrictive posting policy, which requires campus postings to receive prior administrative approval and forbids anonymous authorship. The policy also asks students to refrain from expressing certain viewpoints, granting administrators broad discretion over campus speech and resulting in the suppression of a wide range of protected expression.

Finally, Pomona encourages students to report "bias-related incidents" to the administration and threatens administrative intervention for protected speech. Concerns related to bias are already addressed by existing harassment and discrimination protocols; therefore, the administration should focus its resources on these established systems and avoid soliciting reports of subjective bias.

Scripps College earns an overall yellow light rating for its written policies governing student expression. The university maintains five yellow light policies and three green light policies. Two of Scripps' three harassment policies fail to meet the legal standard for peer hostile environment harassment in an educational setting, putting protected speech that does not reach that threshold at risk.

Expressive activities are further curtailed by Scripps's compliance with the Claremont Consortium's restrictive posting policy, which requires campus postings to receive prior administrative approval and forbids anonymous authorship. The policy also asks students to refrain from expressing certain viewpoints, granting administrators broad discretion over campus speech and resulting in the suppression of a wide range of protected expression. Scripps maintains an accompanying posting policy, which further restricts postings by requiring flyers be submitted online for approval.

Finally, Scripps encourages students to report "bigotry" to the administration. While preventing bigotry may indeed be a laudable goal, mandated reporting can all too easily be applied by administrators to punish disfavored, but protected, speech. The administration should focus its resources on reports of discrimination and harassment, and refrain from soliciting reports of subjective bigotry.

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES ON CLAREMONT COLLEGES

Four of the five schools had controversies that impacted their scores this year. Scripps had no incidents.

CMC had one incident this year. Salman Rushdie, an author whose 1988 novel *The Satanic Verses* prompted a fatwa against him, was invited by the college to deliver a commencement address. Rushdie's recent comments equating pro-Palestinian campus protests to support for a "fascist terrorist group" led to a concerted campaign by the college's Muslim Student Association and local Muslim advocacy groups to rescind his invitation. The MSA issued a statement calling Rushdie's selection "disrespectful" and out of line with the college's commitment to inclusion, and shortly thereafter the Greater Los Angeles chapter of the

Council on American-Islamic Relations publicly urged CMC leadership to address these student concerns in good faith.

In response, Rushdie withdrew from giving his commencement speech. In a statement to the campus community, the college's president said: "I write with news that Sir Salman Rushdie notified us yesterday of his decision to withdraw as our keynote commencement speaker. This decision was his alone and completely beyond our control. We remain steadfast in our commitment to Sir Salman's visit to CMC and have extended an open invitation to him to speak on our campus in the future. As we approach commencement this weekend, more than anything else, we are excited to celebrate our distinguished Class of 2025." This public response mitigated the penalty that CMC would have received for this incident.

Harvey Mudd, Pitzer, and Pomona were each penalized for 2024 protests which disrupted alumni weekend activities at each campus.

At Harvey Mudd, students and alumni affiliated with the grassroots student organization Mudders Against Murder disrupted President Harriet Nembhard's alumni weekend state of the college address. Protesters took to the stage and displayed signs and red-painted hands while chanting and delivering speeches calling for the college to cut its ties with weapons manufacturers and defense companies. The event organizers were forced to reschedule for a later time.

At Pitzer, Pro-Palestinian protesters including alumni and current students interrupted the alumni music and food festival by disconnecting the power during one of the musical performances. The protesters then took over the stage and refused to allow any performances to continue as they chanted and gave speeches calling for divestment from weapons manufacturers and recognize an academic boycott of Israeli universities.

And at Pomona, activists and alumni affiliated with Pomona Divest from Apartheid formed a blockade and constructed an "apartheid wall" to prevent the annual parade of classes from beginning. Protesters chanted "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," and "Disclose, divest, we will not stop, we will not rest." The parade began but protesters then moved to prevent it from proceeding and, after a negotiation between the parade organizers and the protesters, the parade was halted. A panel discussion titled "A History of Activism at Pomona College" was scheduled to begin after the parade was canceled.

HOW CAN THE CLAREMONT SCHOOLS IMPROVE?

One thing some of the Claremont schools could do is reform their “yellow light” speech policies to earn an overall “green light” rating.

TABLE 4: Current Rankings of Claremont Schools and Rankings of Claremont Schools If They Had a “Green Light” Rating

	CURRENT RANKING	RANKING OF SCHOOL IF IT HAD A “GREEN LIGHT” RATING
CMC	1	N/A
Harvey Mudd	192	26
Pitzer	218	39
Pomona	247	48
Scripps	209	32

By improving each university’s speech policies and publicizing these improvements, the Claremont schools can show students that they care about free speech. They must, however, first revise, clarify, and protect those policies by not punishing students and student groups unjustly for their speech. These changes could improve Harvey Mudd’s, Pomona’s, and Scripps’ poor “Administrative Support” rankings. In addition to policy improvements, these schools could also adopt free speech statements based on the Chicago Statement and officially commit to institutional neutrality.

If the Claremont schools used free speech training to teach students about which types of protests are protected and which types are unprotected, then Harvey Mudd, Pitzer, Pomona, and Scripps could additionally improve their poor rankings on “Disruptive Conduct.”

All five Claremont schools performed poorly on “Tolerance Difference.” By teaching students the value of freedom of expression through free speech training and support for open inquiry, the universities could foster a culture of free expression on campus and thereby increase its ranking in political tolerance. This could improve the culture on campus and, as a result, improve the rankings for “Self-Censorship” and “Openness.”

By promoting a commitment to free speech through training, improved policies, and public support, the Claremont schools could improve their rankings in future years and maintain their already good standing in “Tolerance of Liberal Speakers.”

TABLE 5: Component Scores of Claremont Schools and National Averages

COMPONENT	CMC	HARVEY MUDD	PITZER	POMONA	SCRIPPS	NATIONAL AVERAGE	MIN VALUE	MAX VALUE
Comfort Expressing Ideas	10.79	10.16	9.68	9.43	9.09	9.53	5	15
Self-Censorship	13.09	12.49	12.02	12.37	13.04	12.12	3	20
Disruptive Conduct	16.19	15.00	13.97	14.05	15.37	15.50	3	20
Administrative Support	13.48	10.88	11.88	8.38	9.33	11.32	2	20
Openness	8.00	7.92	7.90	7.99	7.96	7.19	0	10
Political Tolerance	7.31	5.20	3.69	3.88	3.60	6.44	3	15
Chicago Statement	3 (Yes)	0 (No)	0 (No)	0 (No)	0 (No)		0	3
Institutional Neutrality	3 (Yes)	0 (No)	0 (No)	0 (No)	0 (No)		0	3
Spotlight Rating	5 (Green)	-5 (Yellow)	-5 (Yellow)	-5 (Yellow)	-5 (Yellow)		-10 (Red)	5 (Green)
Overall score	79.86	54.64	52.14	49.11	53.40	58.67	∞ Penalties	∞ Bonuses



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