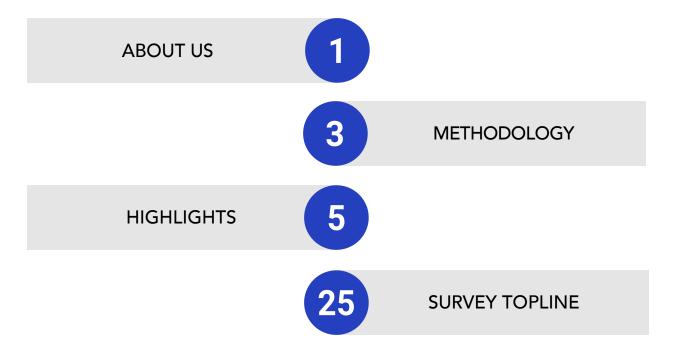


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## **About Us**

### **About Us**

#### AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI (ACTA)

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) is an independent, nonprofit organization committed to academic freedom, academic excellence, and accountability at America's colleges and universities. Founded in 1995, ACTA works with alumni, donors, trustees, and education leaders across the country to support the study of the liberal arts, uphold high academic standards, safeguard the free exchange of ideas on campus, and ensure that the next generation receives an intellectually rich, high-quality education at an affordable price.

Our network consists of alumni and trustees from over 1,300 colleges and universities, including over 23,000 current board members. Our quarterly newsletter, *Inside Academe*, reaches over 15,000 readers.

For more information, visit GoACTA.org.

#### **COLLEGE PULSE**

College Pulse is a survey research and analytics company dedicated to understanding the attitudes, preferences, and behaviors of today's college students. College Pulse offers custom data-driven marketing and research solutions, utilizing its unique American College Student Panel™ that includes over 850,000 college students and recent alumni from more than 1,500 two- and four-year colleges and universities in all 50 states.

For more information, visit collegepulse.com or College Pulse's official X account @CollegeInsights.

# Methodology

## Sampling Methodology

This survey was designed and conducted by College Pulse between May 15, 2024, and August 15, 2024. Surveys were completed by a sample of 482 University of Pittsburgh undergraduate students.

The sample was drawn from College Pulse's American College Student Panel™ that includes over 850,000 verified students representing more than 1,500 different colleges and universities in all 50 states. Panel members are recruited by a number of methods to help ensure diversity in the panel population, including web advertising, permission-based email campaigns, and partnerships with university organizations. To reduce the effects of any non-response bias, a post-stratification adjustment was applied based on demographic distributions of the undergraduate, derived from the 2017 Current Population Survey (CPS), the 2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the 2019–20 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The post-stratification weight rebalanced the sample based on the following benchmarks: gender, race and ethnicity, voter registration, financial aid status, and class year. The sample weighting was accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IFP) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables. The frequencies presented in this report, including the gender and political breakdown, are weighted counts to accurately represent the demographic and political composition of the undergraduate population.

The margin of error for this survey ranges from +/- 4–6 percentage points. Margins of error are typically calculated on probability-based samples and are not technically correct for non-probability online samples. We supply them here to provide a general assessment of error ranges that may be associated with the data.

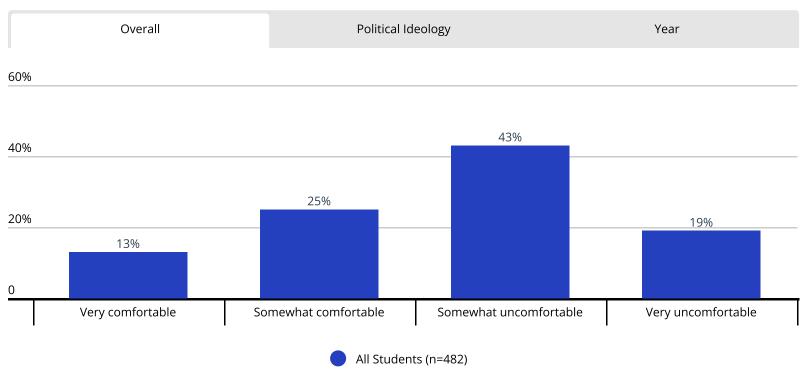
For more information about our methodology, click here or contact methodology@collegepulse.com.

# Highlights

#### **HIGHLIGHT 1**

## A majority of students feel uncomfortable publicly disagreeing with professors on controversial topics.

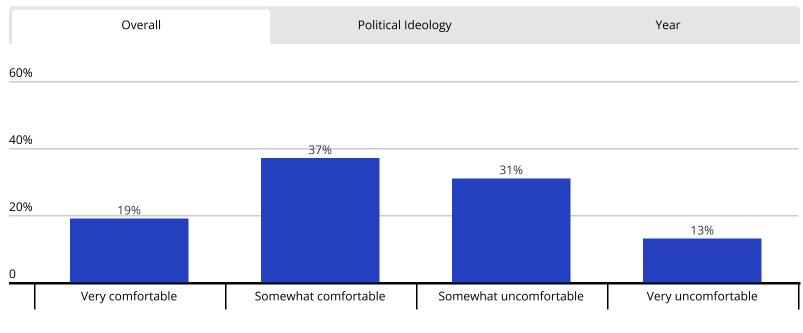
- Almost two-thirds (62%) of students would feel uncomfortable publicly disagreeing with a professor about a controversial topic.
- Conservative students (33%) are more likely than liberal students (13%) to say they would feel very uncomfortable publicly disagreeing with a professor about a controversial topic. (See breakdown)

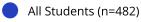


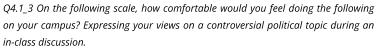


## Nearly half of students feel uncomfortable sharing views on controversial political topics in class discussions.

- Conservative students (57%) are more likely than liberal students (36%) to feel uncomfortable expressing their views on a controversial political topic during an in-class discussion. (See breakdown)
- The class of 2027 is the most likely class to feel very comfortable expressing their views on a controversial topic during a class discussion. (See breakdown)



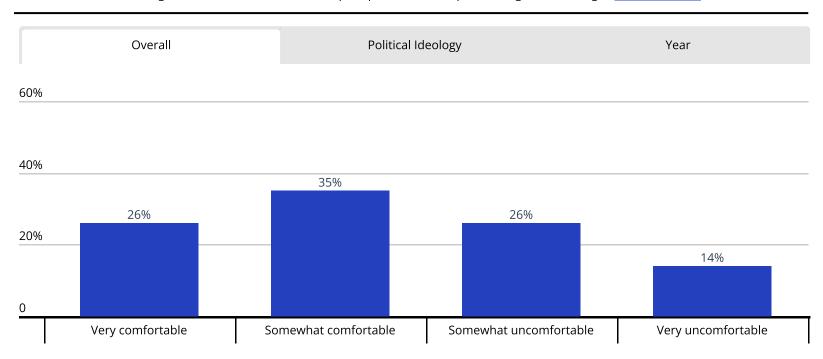


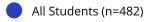




## Almost two-thirds of students feel comfortable sharing views on controversial political topics in common campus spaces.

• Liberal students (67%) are more likely than conservative students (43%) to feel comfortable expressing their views on a controversial topic to other students during a discussion in a common campus space such as a quad, dining hall, or lounge. (See breakdown)



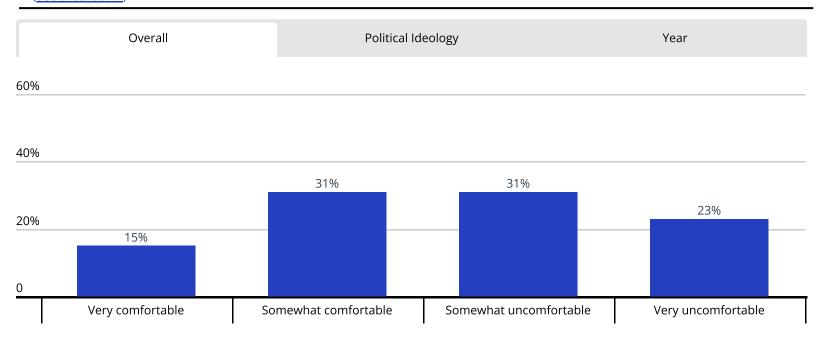


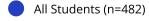
Q4.1\_4 On the following scale, how comfortable would you feel doing the following on your campus? Expressing your views on a controversial political topic to other students during a discussion in a common campus space such as a quad, dining hall, or lounge.

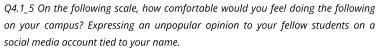


## Over half of students feel hesitant to share unpopular opinions on personal social media accounts.

- Liberal students (50%) and conservative students (54%) are equally likely to feel uncomfortable expressing an unpopular opinion to fellow students on a social media account tied to their name. (See breakdown)
- The class of 2027 is the most likely class to feel very comfortable expressing an unpopular opinion on a personal social media account. (See breakdown)





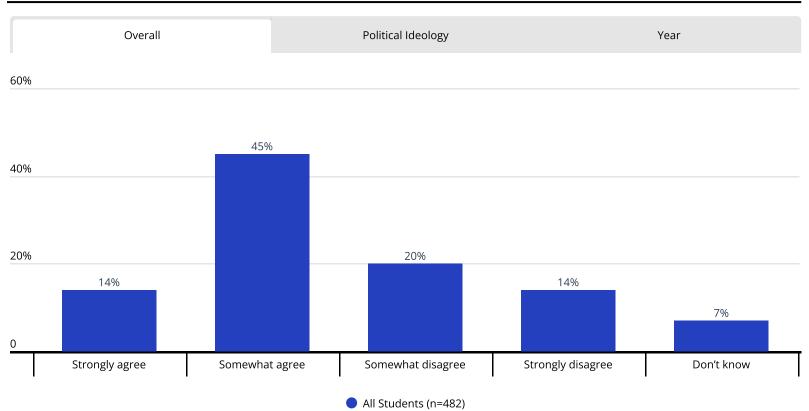




#### **HIGHLIGHT 5**

### Most students believe the political climate prevents them from speaking freely.

• Conservative students (83%) are much more likely than liberal students (49%) to believe the political climate prevents them from saying things they believe because others might find them offensive. (See breakdown)



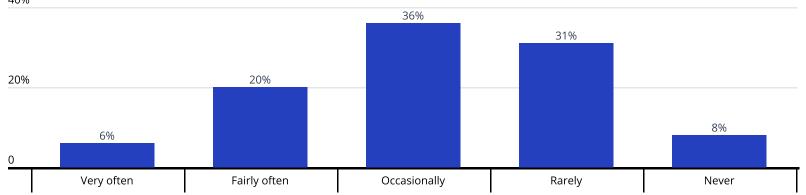
Q4.3 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In general, the political climate these days prevents me from saying things I believe because others might find them offensive.



## Over one-quarter of students feel discouraged from voicing opinions due to fear of reactions from peers, professors, or the administration.

• Conservative students (44%) are more likely than liberal students (19%) to say they often feel they cannot express their opinion on a subject because of how students, a professor, or the administration would respond. (See breakdown)





All Students (n=482)

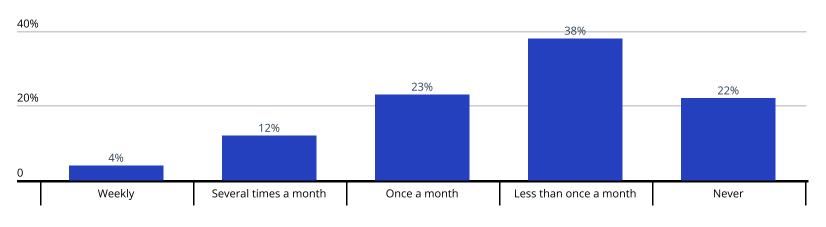
Q4.4 On your campus, how often have you felt that you could not express your opinion on a subject because of how students, a professor, or the administration would respond?

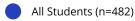


## Students often do not speak up on campus, for fear their opinions will be unwelcome.

• Conservative students (11%) are less likely than liberal students (26%) to say they have never not spoken up on campus because they thought their opinion would be unwelcome. (See breakdown)



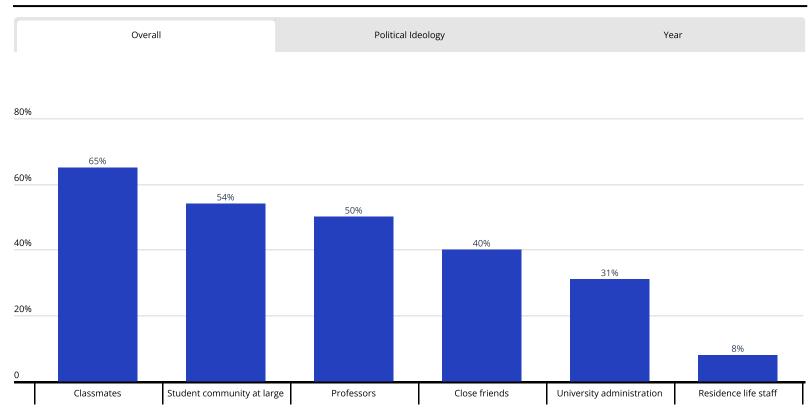






### Fear of classmates' reactions deters 65% of students from speaking up.

• When students do not speak up, they are primarily worried about the response of classmates (65%), the student community (54%) and professors (50%). Students are less concerned about the university administration (31%) and residence life staff (8%).

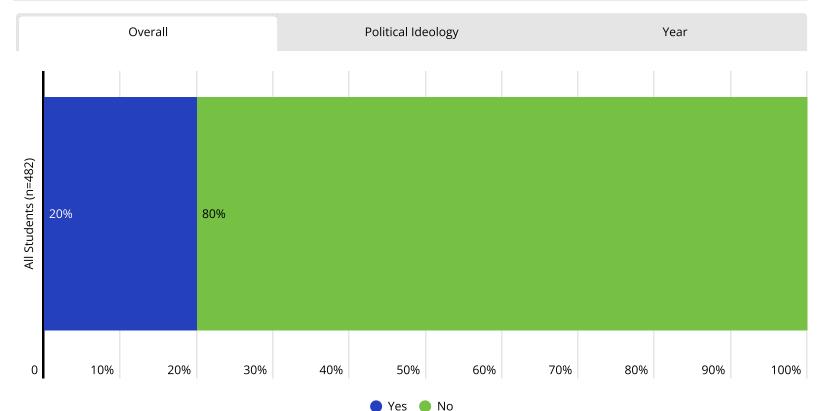




#### HIGHLIGHT 9

### Eighty percent of students have not received training on free expression policies.

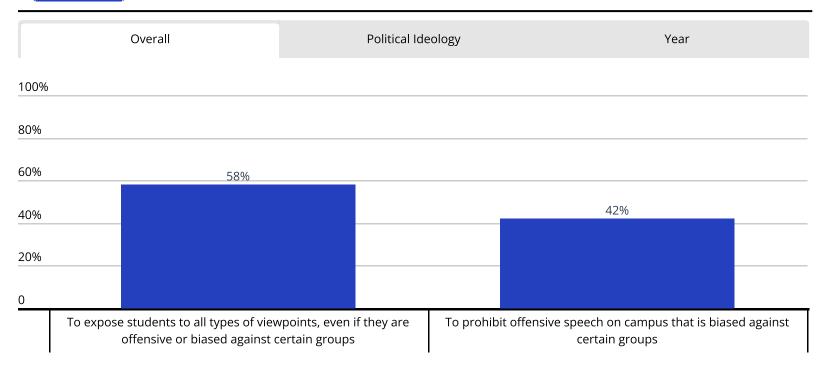
• Liberal students (22%) are more likely than conservative students (14%) to have received training on free expression policies. (See breakdown)

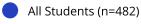




## A majority of students believe the university should welcome all types of viewpoints, even if some find them offensive.

• Conservative students (82%) are much more likely than liberal students (45%) to believe it is more important for colleges to expose students to all types of viewpoints, even if they are offensive or biased against certain groups, than to prohibit offensive speech on campus. (See breakdown)

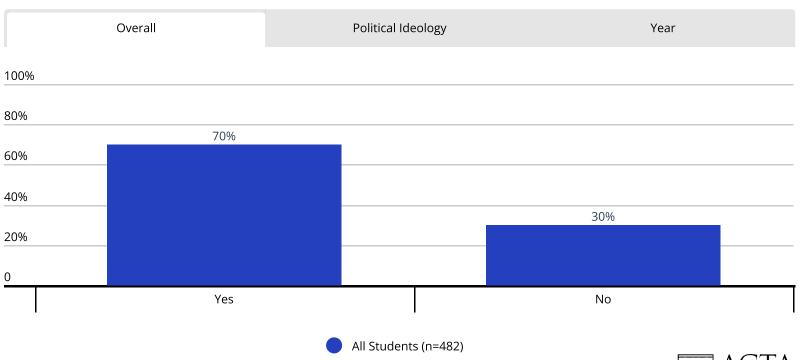






## Seventy percent of students believe professors should be reported for offensive remarks.

- Liberal students (81%) are more than twice as likely as conservative students (40%) to believe professors should be reported to the university if they say something that students find offensive. (See breakdown)
- The class of 2024 is more likely than the class of 2027 to say professors should be reported if they say something students find offensive. (See breakdown)

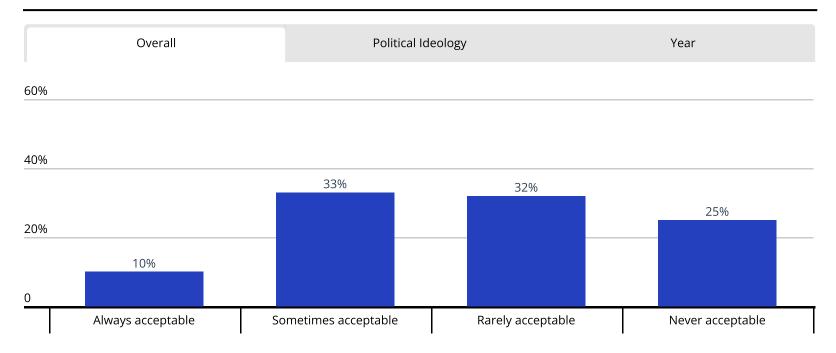


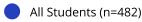


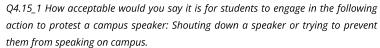
#### HIGHLIGHT 12

### Only one-quarter of students believe shouting down speakers is never acceptable.

- Forty-three percent of students think it is acceptable to shout down speakers or try to prevent them from speaking on campus.
- Liberal students (55%) are more likely than conservative students (19%) to say it is acceptable to shout down speakers or try to prevent them from speaking on campus. (See breakdown)
- Underclassmen are more likely than upperclassmen to say it is always acceptable to shout down a speaker. (See breakdown)



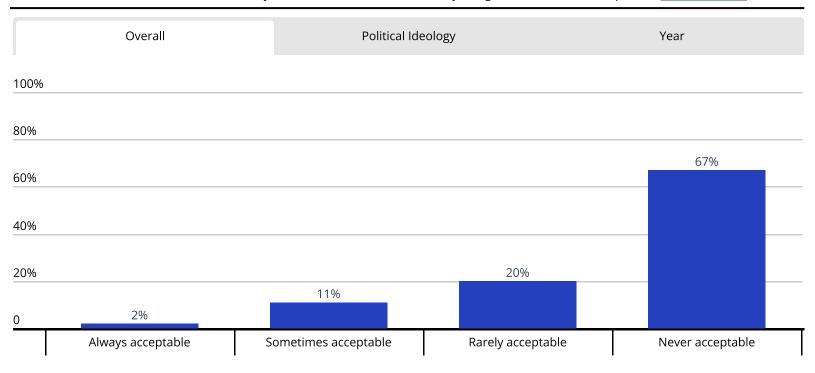


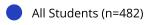




## One-third of students believe it can be acceptable to use violence to stop a campus speech.

- Only two-thirds (67%) of students say it is never acceptable to use violence to stop a campus speech.
- Conservative students (80%) are more likely than liberal students (63%) to say using violence is never acceptable. (See breakdown)

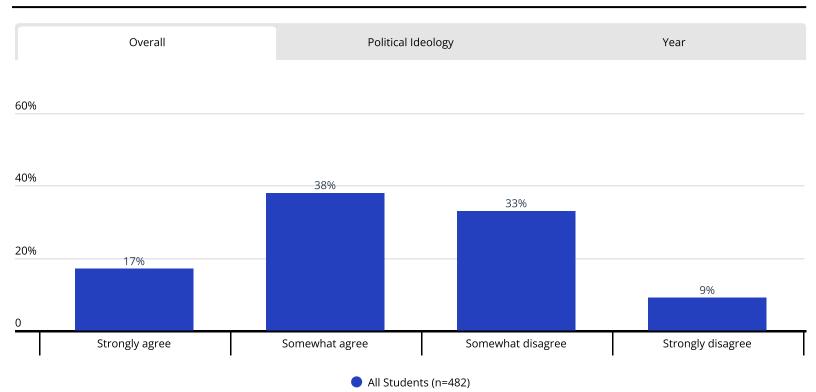






## Liberal students are less likely than conservative students to support disciplinary action for disrupting speakers with whom they disagree.

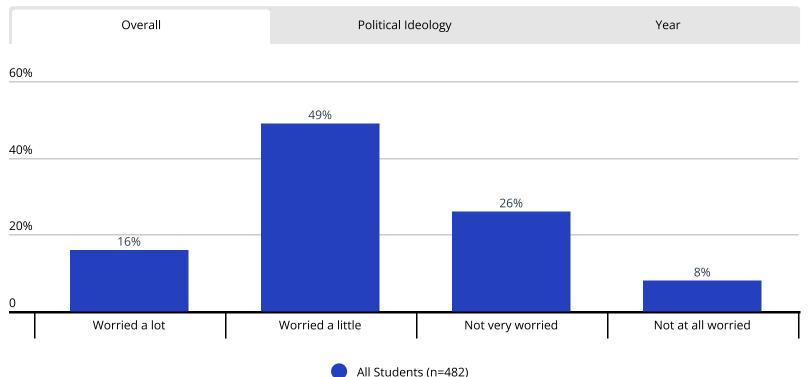
• Liberal students (43%) are significantly less likely than conservative students (78%) to agree that students should face disciplinary consequences for disrupting speakers with whom they disagree. (See breakdown)





## Conservative and liberal students are equally concerned that misunderstood statements will damage their reputations.

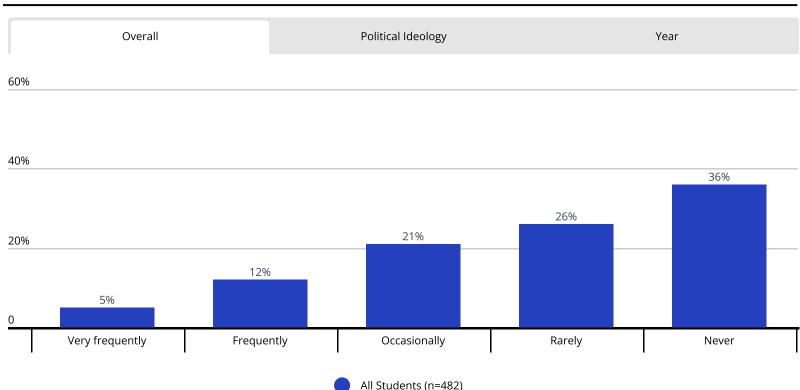
• Conservative students (63%) and liberal students (61%) are equally likely to be worried that misunderstood statements will damage their reputations. (See breakdown)





## Almost one-fifth of students frequently witness uncivil treatment towards peers expressing liberal beliefs.

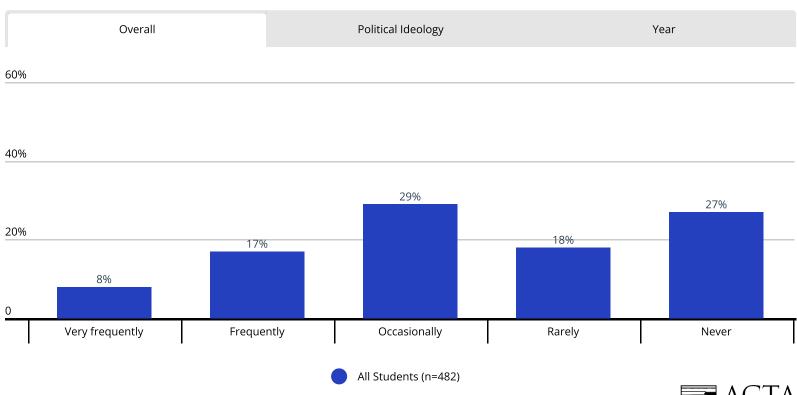
• Liberal students (21%) are more likely than conservative students (11%) to frequently witness students receiving uncivil treatment for expressing liberal or progressive beliefs on campus. (See breakdown)





## Over one-quarter of students frequently witness uncivil treatment of peers who express conservative viewpoints.

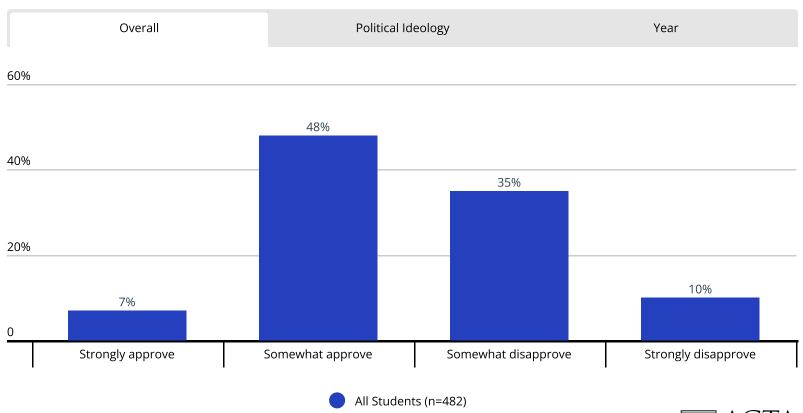
• Conservative students (19%) are more likely than liberal students (5%) to very frequently witness uncivil treatment of peers who express conservative beliefs on campus. (See breakdown)





### A majority of students approve of the university taking political and moral stances.

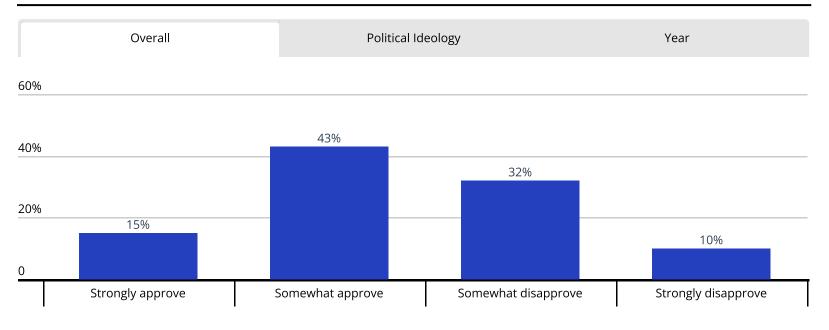
• Liberal students (60%) are significantly more likely than conservative students (43%) to approve of the university taking stances on political and moral issues, whether controversial or not. (See breakdown)





## A majority of students support university action to promote political diversity among faculty.

- More than half (58%) of students believe the university should take action to promote political diversity among faculty.
- Conservative students (68%) are more likely than liberal students (55%) to agree that the university should take action to promote political diversity among faculty. (See breakdown)



All Students (n=482)

Q4.29 A recent national survey of university faculty found that about 56% of professors are Democrat, 16% are Independent, and 27% are Republican. National polling in recent years has Democrats and Republicans roughly even. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My university should take action to promote political diversity among its faculty.



# Survey Topline

Q4.1\_1 On the following scale, how comfortable would you feel doing the following on your campus? *Publicly disagreeing with a professor about a controversial topic*.

13%Very comfortable 25% Somewhat comfortable 43% Somewhat uncomfortable 19% Very uncomfortable

Q4.1\_2 On the following scale, how comfortable would you feel doing the following on your campus? *Expressing disagreement with one of your professors about a controversial topic in a written assignment.* 

20% Very comfortable 39% Somewhat comfortable 29% Somewhat uncomfortable 12% Very uncomfortable

Q4.1\_3 On the following scale, how comfortable would you feel doing the following on your campus? *Expressing your views on a controversial political topic during an in-class discussion.* 

19% Very comfortable 37% Somewhat comfortable 31% Somewhat uncomfortable 13% Very uncomfortable Q4.1\_4 On the following scale, how comfortable would you feel doing the following on your campus? 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.

26% Very comfortable 35% Somewhat comfortable 26% Somewhat uncomfortable 14% Very uncomfortable

Q4.1\_5 On the following scale, how comfortable would you feel doing the following on your campus? *Expressing an unpopular opinion to your fellow students on a social media account tied to your name.* 

15% Very comfortable 31% Somewhat comfortable 31% Somewhat uncomfortable 23% Very uncomfortable

Q4.2 How welcoming is your campus for students who hold unpopular political opinions?

20% Very welcoming50% Somewhat welcoming22% Somewhat unwelcoming7% Very unwelcoming

Q4.3 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In general, the political climate these days prevents me from saying things I believe because others might find them offensive.

Q4.6 When you do not speak up, whose response are you worried about? Select up to 7 options.

14% Strongly agree 45% Somewhat agree 20% Somewhat disagree 14% Strongly disagree 7% Don't know

50% Professors 65% Classmates 40% Close friends

54% Student community at large 8% Residence life staff

31% University administration

1% Other

Q4.4 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?

Q4.7 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?

6% Very often 20% Fairly often 36% Occasionally 31% Rarely 8% Never

11% Extremely likely 22% Very likely

39% Somewhat likely 16% Not very likely 4% Not at all likely 8% Not sure

Q4.5 How often have you not spoken up on campus because you thought your opinion would be unwelcome?

> Q4.8 Have you received training from staff or faculty at your college on free expression policies?

4% Weekly

12% Several times a month

23% Once a month

38% Less than once a month

22% Never

20% Yes 80% No

Q4.9 In which of the following scenarios did you receive training? Select up to 6 options.

63% Orientation

55% Online module from Dean of Students/Student Services Office

17% Mandatory in-person event

29% Required class

28% Residential Life

3% Other

Q4.10 If you had to choose, it is more important for colleges:

42% To prohibit offensive speech on campus that is biased against certain groups

58% To expose students to all types of viewpoints; even if they are offensive or biased against certain groups

Q4.11 How often do your professors promote their own political views in the classroom?

3% Very frequently

10% Frequently

35% Occasionally

30% Rarely

11% Very rarely

11% Never

Q4.12 If a professor says something that students find offensive, should that professor (or class instructor) be reported to the university?

70% Yes

30% No.

Q4.13\_1 Please review the following statements and indicate whether you believe a professor (or class instructor) should be reported for making each statement. "It is clear that Affirmative Action is doing more harm than good, and should be eliminated."

31% Should be reported

38% Should not be reported

31% Other

Q4.13\_2 Please review the following statements and indicate whether you believe a professor (or class instructor) should be reported for making each statement. "If you look at the data, there is no evidence of anti-black bias in police shootings."

44% Should be reported

25% Should not be reported

31% Other

Q4.13\_3 Please review the following statements and indicate whether you believe a professor (or class instructor) should be reported for making each statement. "Owning a gun is the right of every U.S. citizen."

13% Should be reported

57% Should not be reported

30% Other

Q4.13\_4 Please review the following statements and indicate whether you believe a professor (or class instructor) should be reported for making each statement. "Biological sex is a scientific fact. There are two sexes, male and female."

35% Should be reported

34% Should not be reported

27 30% Other

Q4.13\_5 Please review the following statements and indicate whether you believe a professor (or class instructor) should be reported for making each statement. "Requiring vaccination for COVID is an assault on individual freedom."

33% Should be reported 37% Should not be reported 30% Other

Q4.13\_6 Please review the following statements and indicate whether you believe a professor (or class instructor) should be reported for making each statement. "Those who want to eliminate Affirmative Action are perpetuating white privilege."

19% Should be reported 50% Should not be reported 31% Other

Q4.13\_7 Please review the following statements and indicate whether you believe a professor (or class instructor) should be reported for making each statement. "It is clear that we have a problem with racist police in the U.S. shooting unarmed black men."

15% Should be reported 55% Should not be reported 31% Other

Q4.13\_8 Please review the following statements and indicate whether you believe a professor (or class instructor) should be reported for making each statement. "A civilized society doesn't need guns."

Q4.13\_9 Please review the following statements and indicate whether you believe a professor (or class instructor) should be reported for making each statement. "There are a wide variety of sexes. Sex is not binary."

8% Should be reported 61% Should not be reported 31% Other

Q4.13\_10 Please review the following statements and indicate whether you believe a professor (or class instructor) should be reported for making each statement. "Not getting vaccinated for COVID is irresponsible and inconsiderate to others."

18% Should be reported 52% Should not be reported 30% Other

Q4.14\_1 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? *Israel is a genocidal, apartheid state which harms non-Jewish residents.* 

23% Definitely should allow this speaker 40% Probably should allow this this speaker 27% Probably should not allow this speaker 11% Definitely should not allow this speaker

10% Should be reported 59% Should not be reported 31% Other

Q4.14\_2 Should your school ALLOW or NOT ALLOW a speaker on campus who promotes the following idea? *Transgender women are not women in the same way that biological women are.* 

15% Definitely should allow this speaker 29% Probably should allow this this speaker 30% Probably should not allow this speaker 26% Definitely should not allow this speaker

Q4.14\_3 Should your school ALLOW or NOT ALLOW a speaker on campus who promotes the following idea? *Abortion should be illegal under all circumstances.* 

14% Definitely should allow this speaker 27% Probably should allow this this speaker 26% Probably should not allow this speaker 33% Definitely should not allow this speaker

Q4.14\_4 Should your school ALLOW or NOT ALLOW a speaker on campus who promotes the following idea? *Policing in America is systematically racist.* 

28% Definitely should allow this speaker 49% Probably should allow this this speaker 17% Probably should not allow this speaker 5% Definitely should not allow this speaker Q4.14\_5 Should your school ALLOW or NOT ALLOW a speaker on campus who promotes the following idea? *Capitalism should be replaced with socialism.* 

20% Definitely should allow this speaker 48% Probably should allow this this speaker 25% Probably should not allow this speaker 7% Definitely should not allow this speaker

Q4.14\_6 Should your school ALLOW or NOT ALLOW a speaker on campus who promotes the following idea? *Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices do more harm than good.* 

17% Definitely should allow this speaker 31% Probably should allow this this speaker 29% Probably should not allow this speaker 24% Definitely should not allow this speaker

Q4.15\_1 How acceptable would you say it is for students to engage in the following action to protest a campus speaker: Shouting down a speaker or trying to prevent them from speaking on campus.

10% Always acceptable 33% Sometimes acceptable 32% Rarely acceptable 25% Never acceptable

Q4.15\_2 How acceptable would you say it is for students to engage in the following action to protest a campus speaker: Blocking other students from attending a campus speech.

5% Always acceptable19% Sometimes acceptable28% Rarely acceptable48% Never acceptable

Q4.15\_3 How acceptable would you say it is for students to engage in the following action to protest a campus speaker: Using violence to stop a campus speech.

2% Always acceptable11% Sometimes acceptable20% Rarely acceptable67% Never acceptable

Q4.16 In November 2023, some students at Arizona State University threw rocks at a campus building window in order to disrupt a Student Government meeting. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Students should face disciplinary consequences for disrupting speakers with whom they disagree.

2% Strongly agree 1% Somewhat agree 1% Somewhat disagree 0% Strongly disagree 95% N/a Q4.17 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Students should face disciplinary consequences for disrupting speakers with whom they disagree.

17% Strongly agree

38% Somewhat agree

33% Somewhat disagree

9% Strongly disagree

3% N/a

Q4.18 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My university should discipline students who deliberately disrupt classes or events to prevent the voicing of views with which they disagree.

22% Strongly agree

46% Somewhat agree

25% Somewhat disagree

8% Strongly disagree

Q4.19 How many friends on campus do you have who adhere to a different political ideology?

3% All

9% Most

17% Many

18% About half

32% A few

13% Just one or two

7% None

Q4.20 Have you lost friends on campus because of your political beliefs?

18% Yes

82% No

Q4.21 Which of the following two statements comes closer to your own view?

55% People should be allowed to express unpopular opinions in public; even those that are deeply offensive to other people.

45% Government should prevent people from engaging in hate speech against certain groups in Public.

Q4.22 How worried are you about damaging your reputation because someone misunderstands something you have said or done?

16% Worried a lot

49% Worried a little

26% Not very worried

8% Not at all worried

Q4.23 Have you been socially excluded due to any of the following actions? Select all that apply.

16% Sharing your political or social views

7% Having joined or been a member of a student or community organization

9% Posting on social media

6% Attending an on-campus speaking event, protest, demonstration, or rally

75% None of the above

Q4.24 How often have you been socially excluded?

1% Very frequently

4% Frequently

10% Occasionally

9% Rarely

0% Never

75% Other

Q4.25 Have you experienced threats or harassment from fellow students due to any of the following actions? Select up to 4 options.

8% Sharing your political or social views

8% Having joined or been a member of a student or community organization

6% Posting on social media or on your door

9% Attending an on-campus speaking event, protest, demonstration, or rally

82% None of the above

Q4.26 How often have you experienced threats or harassment from fellow students?

1% Very frequently

5% Frequently

8% Occasionally

4% Rarely

0% Never

82% N/a

Q4.27\_1 How often, if ever, have you witnessed a student receive uncivil treatment for expressing the following beliefs on campus? Liberal or progressive beliefs

5% Very frequently12% Frequently21% Occasionally26% Rarely36% Never

Q4.27\_2 How often, if ever, have you witnessed a student receive uncivil treatment for expressing the following beliefs on campus? *Conservative beliefs* 

8% Very frequently17% Frequently29% Occasionally18% Rarely27% Never

Q4.27\_3 How often, if ever, have you witnessed a student receive uncivil treatment for expressing the following beliefs on campus? *Religious beliefs* 

5% Very frequently11% Frequently26% Occasionally25% Rarely35% Never

Q4.28 Generally speaking, do you approve of your university taking stances on political and moral issues, whether controversial or not?

7% Strongly approve48% Somewhat approve35% Somewhat disapprove10% Strongly disapprove

Q4.29 A recent national survey of university faculty found that about 56% of professors are Democrat, 16% are Independent, and 27% are Republican. National polling in recent years has Democrats and Republicans roughly even. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? *My university should take action to promote political diversity among its faculty.* 

15% Strongly agree 43% Somewhat agree 32% Somewhat disagree 10% Strongly disagree

Q4.30 How often have you been treated unfairly on campus by professors, teaching fellows, or administrators as a result of your political opinions and beliefs?

2% Frequently11% Sometimes18% Rarely69% Never

Q5.1 Does the First Amendment allow your university to ban hate speech on campus?

26% Yes

29% No.

45% Not sure

Q6.1 I would feel freer to discuss controversial topics on campus if... Select up to 6 options.

36% There were more student groups dedicated to fostering wideranging debate and discussion

29% There was greater viewpoint diversity among faculty members

34% First year orientation included more discussion about the importance of free expression on campus

33% My university hosted a broader diversity of guest speakers

30% Senior administrators (presidents; provosts; deans; and department chairs) did more to encourage a free speech culture

17% My university reformed existing policies that discourage free and open discussion

26% I already feel free to discuss controversial topics on campus

18% None of the above

Q6.2 What do you believe is the most effective change to improve the campus climate?

20% There were more student groups dedicated to fostering wideranging debate and discussion

10% There was greater viewpoint diversity among faculty members

16% First year orientation included more discussion about the importance of free expression on campus

12% My university hosted a broader diversity of guest speakers

18% Senior administrators (presidents; provosts; deans; and department chairs) did more to encourage a free speech culture

12% My university reformed existing policies that discourage free and open discussion

13% Something else

Q6.3 If you could suggest one other reform to senior university leaders to foster freer deliberation on campus, what would it be?

Open text response



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