



TO: Lauren Noble, Executive Director – The Buckley Institute
FROM: Rob Schmidt, Inquire
Re: National Undergraduate Study – Executive Summary
Date: September 18, 2025

Below are the key findings from our eleventh annual national study of undergraduates on behalf of the Buckley Institute.

Part I – The Constitution, First Amendment, Free Speech and Intellectual Diversity

Record high numbers of students believe both the U.S. Constitution and the First Amendment are important. Students remain divided on speech codes. Large proportions say encouraging free speech and intellectual diversity are important and that hearing opposing views gives them a better education.

- By a 73% to 20% margin, students say the Constitution is a very important document for our country rather than an outdated document. This 73% “Important” score is the highest recorded response in the seven years this question has been asked.
- Nine in ten (90%) say the First Amendment is an important amendment that still needs to be followed and respected in today’s society. Like the previous question on the Constitution, this “Important” response is a record high.
- Students remain divided on their school having speech codes to regulate speech for students and faculty – 44% Favor to 47% Oppose. Education majors (59%) and Hispanic students (51%) are the groups where support for speech codes eclipses 50%.
- By a nearly three to one margin of 72% to 25% – students say their school encouraging free speech and intellectual diversity is more important than their school preventing offensive or insensitive dialogue.
- Nearly nine in ten (89%) agree that hearing and discussing opinions they disagree with gives them a better education and better prepares them to be a leader in the future. Only 9% disagree.



Part II – Expression in the Classroom

When it comes to sharing ideas, opinions or beliefs with professors and classmates, majorities continue to often feel intimidated doing so. Nearly half cannot bring themselves to being close friends with a person from a different political party.

- A majority (53%) say they have often felt intimidated in sharing their ideas, opinions or beliefs in class because they were different than those of their professors. This is similar to last year's score of 51%.
 - Conservative students (59%) are more likely to often feel intimidated compared to liberal students and moderate students – 51% and 54% – respectively.

- When it comes to opinions or beliefs that were different than their classmates or peers, 57% have often felt intimidated in sharing their ideas, opinions or beliefs. This is very similar to last year where 56% often felt intimidated.
 - Notably, there is no significant difference between conservative and liberal students on this question – 61% and 60% – respectively.
 - More broadly, in nine out of the 11 years asking this question, the “Often” score has been higher for classmates/peers than for professors.

- Forty-six percent (46%) of students agree that they cannot bring themselves to being close friends with someone who affiliates with a different political party than them. This agreement is higher than the 40% from last year, but slightly lower than the 48% from 2023.
 - There is a stark difference by ideology, as agreement reaches 64% among liberal students compared to 34% among moderates and only 25% among conservatives.
 - Six in ten (60%) Education majors agree as well.



Part III – Offensive and Hate Speech

A record high says hate speech is still technically protected under the First Amendment as free speech – reaffirming the record high belief of the importance of the First Amendment observed earlier. Despite this, almost half – another record high – says it is sometimes appropriate to shout down or disrupt a speaker on campus. Roughly four in ten continue to believe that physical violence can be justified to prevent someone from espousing hateful views.

- One third (33%) agree that offensive speech should be subject to criminal prosecution, similar to 31% who said the same last year.
 - Agreement increases to 39% among liberal students and 41% among Education majors.
- Thirty-eight percent (38%) agree that political comments they disagree with can be harmful to their mental health.
 - Nearly half (48%) of liberal students agree compared to only 31% of moderate students and 27% of conservatives.
 - A majority (53%) of Education majors agree.
- Six in ten (60%) agree that hate speech – no matter how racist or bigoted it is – is still technically protected under the First Amendment as free speech. This is up six-points from last year and is a record high over the nine years this question has been asked. Majorities of all key sub-groups agree with this statement.
- Forty-eight percent (48%) agree that it is sometimes appropriate to shout down or disrupt a speaker on their campus. This is up eight-points from last year and is another record high.
 - Sixty percent (60%) of liberal students agree compared to only 38% of moderates and 35% of conservatives.
- Thirty-nine percent (39%) agree that physical violence can be justified to prevent a person from using hate speech or making racially charged comments. This is nearly identical to last year when 38% agreed.
 - Agreement continues to be highest among liberal students, at 44%. In this case, moderate students are closer to liberals, as 40% agree. Just 29% of conservative students agree.



Part IV – Diversity and Race Issues

Most continue to say professors should be required to make statements of diversity, equity and inclusion as a condition of employment. Students divide on whether America is moving forward and the promise of equality continues to be extended to more people or if America is inextricably linked to white supremacy and most minorities remain excluded from equality. On antisemitism, seven in ten believe it is either a problem or exists on campus and nearly half support some form of federal government involvement to address it.

- Nearly two thirds (65%) agree that their school should require all professors and administrators make statements in favor of diversity, equity, and inclusion as a condition of employment. This is slightly higher than last year when 61% agreed, but lower than 2022 when 67% agreed.
 - Three in four (75%) liberal students agree as do 69% of Education majors.
 - By race, agreement is highest among Hispanic and Asian students – each at 70%.
- On progress on equality in America, students are divided, as 47% say America is moving forward on the promise of equality and 48% say America is inextricably linked to white supremacy and in general most minorities remain excluded from the American promise of equality.
 - Two thirds (66%) of liberal students say America is linked to white supremacy while 74% of conservative students say America is moving forward.
 - While a majority (52%) of white students say America is moving forward, majorities or pluralities of black students (62%), Hispanic students (52%) and Asian students (47%) say America is linked to white supremacy.
- Seventy-four percent (74%) believe that their school is properly following the Supreme Court’s ruling and is no longer evaluating student applicants based on race.
- When it comes to antisemitism on campus, the plurality (30%) say it is a problem that merits federal government involvement even if they don’t agree with every step the federal government has taken to address it. Twenty-three percent (23%) say antisemitism exists, but federal government intervention is not appropriate and schools should address this matter themselves. Similar shares take the “end of the spectrum” opinions, as 17% say antisemitism is a serious problem and the federal government’s actions are legitimate and necessary, and 16% say antisemitism is not a problem and the federal government’s efforts are purely political.



Part V – Higher Education

Most do not believe a degree earned today has the same value as when people their parents' age were in college. Six in ten believe schools should be paying taxes on the investment earnings from their endowments.

- A slight majority (51%) disagree that a college or university degree earned today has just as much value as when people their parents' age were in college. Forty-four percent (44%) agree.
 - Business majors (50% to 44%) and Asian students (46% to 45%) are the only key sub-groups where agreement exceeds disagreement.
- Six in ten (61%) agree that schools should be paying taxes on the investment earnings from their endowments. Twenty-one percent (21%) disagree and a large 18% are unsure.

Part VI – Economics

Students remain divided on wanting to live under capitalism or socialism – with a very slight edge towards capitalism. Almost half believe socialist countries like Cuba and the Soviet Union offer a better economic model than capitalist countries like the United States. Most disagree that government-run groceries stores would improve access and cost of food. Seven in ten believe rent control is a good way to make housing more affordable.

- By a 40% to 36% margin, students are split over wanting to live under capitalism or socialism. A notable 24% are unsure. Sentiments continue to be very divided on this question.
 - By a greater than two to one margin, conservative students prefer capitalism (55% to 26%). Liberal students are more divided, but the plurality prefer socialism (44% to 35%).
 - Fifty percent (50%) of Humanities majors prefer socialism.
- A plurality (46%) agree that socialist countries like Cuba and the Soviet Union offer a better economic model than capitalist countries like the United States.
 - Nearly six in ten (58%) liberal students agree while 63% of conservative students disagree.
 - Fifty-five percent (55%) of both Humanities and Education majors also agree.

- By a 47% to 42% margin, students disagree that replacing private grocery stores with government-run grocery stores would provide the public with better access to food at a better price.
 - Liberal and conservative students are again on opposite sides as 52% of liberals agree and 62% of conservatives disagree.
 - Fifty-eight percent (58%) of Education majors and 50% of Humanities majors agree.
- Nearly seven in ten (69%) agree that rent control is a good way to make housing more affordable for everyone. Majorities of all key sub-groups agree, including 56% of conservative students.

Part VII – Miscellaneous Issues

A large majority continue to say the issue of transgender athletes is one of fairness that disadvantages other athletes. Nearly nine in ten support some form of deportation for people who have illegally entered the United States, with the prevailing response being deportation for those who have committed violent crimes. Almost half continue to believe the Supreme Court is a partisan institution and outdated. Students are divided, but slightly more say Palestine is a better ally for the United States than Israel. They are also divided on the possibility of a peaceful two-state solution.

- Most students continue to say the issue of transgender athletes is one of fairness that disadvantages other athletes (61%). One in three (33%) believe transgender athletes should be able to participate in whichever gender class they feel more comfortable. These are similar to results over the last two years.
- The plurality (42%) believe that individuals who have illegally entered the United States and have committed a violent crime should be deported. Another 28% believe illegal immigrants who have committed a crime of any kind should be deported and 19% say all individuals who have illegally entered the United States should be deported. Only 9% oppose deportation entirely.

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- By a 48% to 41% margin, students believe the Supreme Court has become nothing more than a partisan institution like Congress compared to believing the Court tries to decide cases based on their understanding of the law, regardless of political implications. This is very similar to responses over the last two years.
 - Sixty-four percent (64%) of liberal students believe the Court is a partisan institution compared to 55% of conservative students who believe the Court tries to decide cases based on their understanding of the law.

- Students divide on whether Palestine (33%) or Israel (29%) is a better ally for the United States. The highest response is the 38% who are unsure.
 - By a 46% to 25% margin, liberal students say Palestine is a better ally as do Humanities majors (43% to 23%).
 - Conservative students say Israel by a similar margin of 43% to 16%.

- Students again divide, 46% to 44%, on the possibility of a two-state solution where Israel and Palestine live peacefully next to each other.
 - By race, black students say it is not possible (53% to 39%) while Hispanic students say it is possible (56% to 39%).
 - There are no significant ideological differences on this question.

- Students are most likely to have attended LGBTQ (19%), Social Justice (18%), pro-Abortion Rights (16%) and anti-Trump (15%) rallies or protests over the last year. Notably, attendance for all causes decreased year over year.



Part VIII – Political Environment

Six in ten disapprove of the job President Trump is doing and almost half say things in the United States are worse than they anticipated since President Trump was elected. The majority believe political leaders should still be finding ways to work together.

- By a nearly two to one margin, students disapprove of the job Donald Trump is doing as President – 62% to 33%. This includes 45% who “Strongly Disapprove.”
 - Two-thirds (66%) of conservative students approve.
 - There are noticeable gender differences as 40% of men approve compared to only 28% of women.

- A plurality (46%) say things in the United States are worse than they anticipated since President Trump was elected. Thirty-seven percent (37%) say they are as they anticipated and only 13% say they are better than they anticipated.

- By a 56% to 38% margin, students believe political leaders should still be finding ways to work together rather than wanting politicians to fight harder and break traditions and norms.
 - Liberal students are the most divided, as 52% prefer compromise and 45% want politicians to fight harder.

Methodology: Inquire conducted a national survey of 820 undergraduate students from September 5 to 14, 2025. All student participants were under the age of 25 and attend either a four-year private or public college or university on a full-time basis. This study’s universe is the “conventional” four-year undergraduate, therefore excluding undergraduates who either attend a two-year school, technical school, junior college or trade school, are over the age of 24 or attend on a part-time basis. All interviews were conducted online and respondents were carefully selected and screened from a nationwide representative platform of individuals who elect to participate in online surveys. Data for this survey have been stratified by age, race/ethnicity, gender and geography using the most recent National Center for Education Statistics Report (2023) to reflect the actual demographic composition of four-year, full-time undergraduate students in the United States. According to the NCES Statistics, there are approximately 8,037,036 undergraduates who fall within these parameters. Because the sample is based on those who initially self-selected for participation rather than a probability sample, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated. However, a confidence interval of 95% was calculated in order to produce an error estimate of +/- 3.4% for the 820 respondents. This error estimate should be taken into consideration in much the same way that analysis of probability polls takes into account the margin of sampling error. The error estimate increases for cross-tabulations. Totals may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding, refusals and the ability for respondents to give multiple answers to certain questions. All surveys may be subject to multiple sources of error, including, but not limited to question wording and ordering, sampling error, coverage error and measurement error. This study is the eleventh iteration of our undergraduate research on behalf of the Buckley Institute.

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