



# Study: Instagram safety features flawed

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# The Gadsden Times

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## Explore Alabama's caves on scenic road trip

Jennifer Lindahl  
Montgomery Advertiser  
USA TODAY NETWORK

There's something magical about going underground, stepping into cool, echoing spaces carved by time.

Alabama's northern half is full of these wonders, and a road trip through its caves is one of the coolest (literally) adventures in the south.

Alabama is home to some of the Southeast's most spectacular caves, and this eight-stop road trip is your passport to waterfalls, prehistoric artifacts, towering underground chambers and even dinner beneath a sandstone overhang.

Hidden Gems USA is your guide to Alabama's coolest underground road trip, and this eight-stop road trip is your passport to waterfalls, prehistoric artifacts, towering underground chambers and even dinner beneath a sandstone overhang.

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## DHS to boost security at ICE offices

Rick Jervis, Nick Penzenstadler  
and Lauren Villagran  
USA TODAY

DALLAS – Immigration attorney Vinesh Patel had been troubled by the growing security risks at Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities when the deadly attack he feared happened.

A sniper opened fire Sept. 24 on an ICE field office, killing one person who was being detained and injuring two others. It was the latest in a string of violent attacks on the nation's immigration system that are raising serious security concerns for ICE agents, attorneys, judges and migrants themselves.

Across the country, raucous protests at ICE facilities, aggressive tactics by masked agents in the field and heated political rhetoric on both sides have become a dangerous new backdrop to what for years had been the quiet, mundane work of immigration enforcement.

The day after the shooting, the Department of Homeland Security announced plans to beef up security at ICE facilities. Federal investigators said the Dallas shooter, who died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, intended to target ICE agents – not the migrants caught in his crosshairs.

DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia

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Alabama mascot Big Al and Auburn mascot Aubie stand together as Alabama Governor Kay Ivey proclaims Aug. 30 as College Colors Day during a press conference on the state capitol steps in Montgomery on Aug. 21, 2024. The event was attended by mascots and students from colleges and universities around the state. MICKEY WELSH/ADVERTISER

## Auburn or Alabama?

### US News & World Report ranks best colleges in country

Jennifer Lindahl  
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USA TODAY NETWORK

Auburn University earned the top spot among Alabama colleges in the 2026 U.S. News & World Report Best College rankings, coming in at No. 102 nationally and No. 49 among Top Public Schools. The new ranking places Auburn just outside the top 100, but ahead of any other Alabama-based institution.

The rankings assess more than 1,700 colleges and universities nationwide on key metrics, including academics, institutional values and more.

"It is always gratifying to receive national recognition for Auburn's rigorous academics and vibrant co-curricular offerings," President Christopher B. Roberts said in a news release. "Together with our rich campus environment, these elements make an Auburn degree both powerful and meaningful."

#### What changed in this year's rankings?

U.S. News kept its college ranking formula mostly unchanged this year, with only a few minor updates. Among the tweaks, the minimum student cohort size was raised from 20 to 25, and standardized test scores, ACT and SAT, were removed as ranking factors for Regional Colleges North and Regional Universities North.

#### What is Auburn University's enrollment rate?

Auburn enrolled 27,907 undergraduate students in fall 2024, reflecting its continued growth and appeal. Auburn also ranked No. 46 nationally for the lowest acceptance rate, highlighting its competitive admissions process.

While Auburn does offer test-optional admissions, for fall 2026 admissions, a limited number of students

with a GPA of at least 3.6 may be considered without test scores. Starting in fall 2027, all applicants will be required to submit standardized test scores.

#### Where does Alabama, UAB rank in U.S. News & World Report?

Auburn's position topped the list for Alabama. Here's how other Alabama schools ranked this year:

- #132 University of Alabama at Birmingham
- #169 The University of Alabama
- #179 Samford University
- #242 University of Alabama at Huntsville
- #363 University of South Alabama
- #395-434 Alabama State University

Jennifer Lindahl is a Breaking and Trending Reporter for the Deep South Connect Team for Gannett/USA Today. Connect with her on X @jenn\_lindahl and email at jlindahl@gannett.com.



First responders help students portraying casualties in a simulated airplane disaster as Montgomery Regional Airport conducts a full scale emergency exercise at the facility in Montgomery, Ala., on Sept. 25. MICKEY WELSH / ADVERTISER

## Montgomery Regional airport simulates large-scale disaster

Marty Roney  
Montgomery Advertiser  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Montgomery Regional Airport conducted a full-scale emergency plan exercise along with local, state and federal emergency response agencies Thursday morning.

The Federal Aviation Administration requires an exercise every three years to evaluate the airport's emergency preparedness and response procedures, said Brittney Dabney, marketing and communications manager for the airport.

The exercise drill simulated large-

scale aircraft incident and allow the airport's "...first responders, and mutual aid agencies to test coordination, communication, and resource deployment in a realistic, controlled environment," she said.

"Safety is always our top priority," said Loyd Jenkins, interim executive director and chief of police. "Exercises like this ensure that our airport team and emergency partners are prepared to respond quickly and effectively should a real emergency ever occur. Training together strengthens our readiness and ultimately enhances

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