Cascade vs. WordPress.

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We believe it is important to remember that each CMS vendor is going to push their particular product, which is a small component of the overall marketing challenge you have with a new website project. Technology is always changing. New products are constantly coming out. The Beacon Team is always looking for new tools and technologies to "plug into our technology stack" and keep our customers ahead of the curve. So, you can count on us to provide independent, unbiased views with plenty of research and expertise behind them.

We have put together a comprehensive side-by-side overview of Cascade CMS and WordPress below from many sources - highlighting key strengths, differentiators, features, pros & cons, potential challenges, and other information that we believe will help you understand the differences. We highly encourage you to request demos of each CMS, which we would be glad to set up for you.

Topic.	Cascade CMS.	WordPress.
Market Position.	A significant player in the higher education CMS space. Now, ~23% of colleges and universities use a proprietary CMS and Cascade CMS is used by several hundred institutions (~8%).	Used by approximately 40% of all U.S. higher education institutions, especially popular among smaller colleges, schools with limited IT resources and marketing-led web teams prioritizing ease of use.
Target Audience.	Enterprise-level organizations, particularly higher education, government, healthcare, & technology sectors. Geared towards large content teams and complex sites with strong governance needs.	Suitable for a wider range of users, from beginners to experienced developers. Popular with bloggers, small to mid-sized businesses, and individuals who want a flexible and user-friendly platform.
User Interface.	The platform's user-friendly design minimizes the learning curve, especially for non-technical users, enabling team members to quickly adapt and contribute effectively without extensive training. Content preview and drag-and-drop editing, with simple content entry wizards and built-in design templates.	The intuitive dashboard makes it easy for non-technical users to manage content, update pages, and add new posts without needing coding skills. Visual editors and pre-designed templates simplify the setup process.
Customization & Flexibility.	Provides robust features for customizing folder structures and workflows. Supports XSLT and Velocity for advanced templating and customization. Supports custom-built, highly flexible page templates to deliver a variety of unique layouts from a single	Offers extensive customization options through a vast library of themes and plugins. With thousands of themes and plugins available, WordPress allows for extensive customization to meet specific business needs and branding requirements.

	template across the website (schools, departments, etc.). This enables developers to create unique designs that maintain brand consistency. This flexibility can reduce the number of templates to design (reducing development, maintenance & training costs too).	Choose from 55K+ downloadable plugins (e.g., SEO optimization, anti-spam protection, site-building features & more). Choose from over 8K+ different, preset themes, or customize your own theme (Theme Developer handbook available for assistance). While themes offer customization, premium themes may be needed for full control.
Content Authoring & Management.	Strong capabilities for content authoring, including versioning, workflows, accessibility checks, and link checking. Excellent support for content acquisition and aggregation from multiple sources.	Excels in content authoring with a user-friendly interface and extensive plugin ecosystem. Rich text editor simplifies content creation.
Scalability.	Efficiently manages websites of varying sizes, from small departmental sites to large, complex university portals, without compromising performance. It is specifically designed to handle large volumes of content and traffic, making it suitable for enterprise-level deployments.	Primarily suited for small to mid-sized institutions, though it can be scaled for larger needs with the right infrastructure and optimization.
Security.	Provides robust security measures, including granular user permissions, secure deployment options (cloud or installed), and collaboration with security teams for patching vulnerabilities. Requires authentication for login and enforces strong password policies.	Security is regularly enhanced by the WordPress Security Team, but relies on users keeping their core software, plugins, and themes updated. Vulnerabilities can arise from outdated extensions, compromised login credentials, and supply chain attacks.
Support.	Users have access to extensive documentation, training resources, and a responsive support team, ensuring they can maximize the platform's capabilities. Very active user community and support network, providing resources and assistance for troubleshooting and best practices.	A large, active community of developers and users provides extensive support, tutorials, and forums to help troubleshoot issues and share best practices. Huge ecosystem of themes and plugins. Hosting providers often offer WordPress-specific support as well.

CMS Delivery.	Push: Web pages are pre-published as static HTML and do not require interactivity with the Cascade database, which can also reduce performance issues. This decoupling with the CMS keeps your website operational even if the CMS goes down, and helps support re-usable content for efficiencies.	Pull: Pages are rendered dynamically by pulling from the CMS. The website and CMS database are coupled and therefore, both must be operational to publish pages. Heightened potential for performance issues as pages are being dynamically built over the network.
Multisite Management.	Users can manage multiple websites from a single Cascade CMS instance, making it ideal for organizations with diverse web properties.	Manage multiple distinct websites from a single WordPress installation, sharing core files, themes, and plugins.
Responsive / Mobile Design.	Cascade CMS facilitates the creation of mobile-friendly websites, ensuring that content is accessible and visually appealing across all devices to ensure a consistent user experience.	Many WordPress themes are designed to be mobile-friendly, ensuring your site looks good and functions well on all devices.
Multilingual Support.	The platform supports content in multiple languages, facilitating global reach and ensuring that organizations can effectively communicate with diverse audiences.	Plugins like WPML allow you to create multilingual websites, making it easier to reach a global audience.
Search Engine Optimization.	Cascade CMS includes features that help optimize content to improve search engine rankings, such as metadata management and URL optimization to enhance site visibility and reach. Users can define and manage metadata fields, also improving content organization and searchability.	WordPress is designed with built-in search engine optimization, offering plugins (like Yoast SEO) to help improve your site's visibility on search engines (and gather information from the content to increase traffic).
Integration / APIs.	Integrates easily with existing and third party systems (CRM, Marketing Automation, Faculty & Staff Directory, Course Catalog, Events Calendar, Google Analytics, social media platforms, etc.) using web services, connectors, and feeds. This further enhances functionality and data flow.	WordPress seamlessly integrates with various third-party services such as email marketing tools, payment gateways, and social media platforms.

Content Publishing.	Scheduled publishing features allow content to be automatically published or removed at specified times, optimizing content management and reducing manual intervention.	Share content with a click of a button. Insert content from Google Drive while maintaining formatting or type it in directly to the content editor, place images and then simply publish the content to make it go live on the web.
Analytics & Reporting.	Built-in analytics tools provide insights into website performance and user engagement, enabling data-driven decision-making and strategy refinement. Cascade CMS can be integrated with analytics tools, providing further insights into website performance and user behavior.	Integration with tools like Google Analytics provides detailed insights into website performance, helping you make data-driven decisions.
Accessibility.	Built-in tools help ensure that websites meet accessibility standards, such as WCAG, promoting inclusivity by making content available to all users, including those with disabilities.	WordPress strives to adhere to web accessibility standards, making it easier to create websites that are accessible to users with disabilities.
Asset Management.	The system includes a digital asset manager for organizing and retrieving media files efficiently.	The built-in CMS features make it easy to organize and manage large amounts of content, including posts, pages, and media files.
Mobile App.	Cascade CMS does not have its own native mobile app for users to manage content, but it is a responsive web-based system, meaning you can access and update content from your mobile device through a web browser. It is designed for mobile-first editing, allowing for flexibility and accessibility on any device without needing to install extra software, though a VPN might be required for off-campus access.	Create and edit posts, manage media, view site statistics, moderate comments, and customize themes and menus the WordPress mobile app, available on both iOS and Android devices. Activate push notifications to keep in-the-know with the site's activity and follower communications.
Collaboration.	Cascade CMS allows multiple users to work simultaneously on different sections of a website, streamlining the content creation	Multiple users can work on different sections of a website built with WordPress. It is designed with collaboration in mind

	process and reducing bottlenecks.	and includes features that facilitate team work.
Workflow Management.	Fully supports customizable, multi-step processes to manage content creation, editing, publishing, and other asset actions. These workflows can be assigned to individual assets or entire folders, ensuring content moves through predefined steps for approvals and tasks before being published, with detailed triggers and reporting to monitor progress.	Natively supports workflows through a variety of plugins that allow automated, step-by-step processes for content creation, task management, and integrations with other applications. While WordPress doesn't include complex workflow features, specialized plugins like Oasis Workflow or Bit Flows offer visual builders to create custom editorial, business process, and automation workflows, enabling collaboration and streamlining operations.
Form Builder.	Includes a built-in Form Builder tool that allows users to create and customize web forms with various input field types. This tool is used to create a Form asset within the CMS, which can then be attached to a page to collect information from visitors, such as through newsletter sign-ups or event registrations.	WordPress does not have a built-in form builder, but a WordPress form builder plugin is available. Popular options like WPForms, Gravity Forms, and Ninja Forms offer drag-and-drop interfaces and various features, such as templates, conditional logic, and payment integration, to create different types of forms for your website.
Version Control.	Cascade CMS has robust version control, which allows users to track changes, compare different versions of an asset, restore previous versions, and even view an asset's state at a specific point in time. The system automatically creates a new version for each change, saving the version history with timestamps and user information, which is crucial for maintaining edit histories and preventing accidental overwrites.	WordPress has a built-in content revision system for posts and pages, but for a full version control system (code, content), external tools like Git or dedicated plugins like WP Pusher and WP Rollback can be used. While WordPress revisions offer basic change tracking and restoration for content, Git and other systems are necessary to manage changes across files, the database, and different development environments, providing more robust features for collaboration and error recovery.
Content Reuse.	Cascade CMS provides robust content reuse features, allowing you to "create once, publish everywhere" through several methods, including content blocks for common sections, references to display an	WordPress provides built-in functionality for content reuse through Reusable Blocks within the Gutenberg block editor. You can save any block or group of blocks as a reusable block, which then allows you to

	asset in multiple locations, and the ability to clone pages where changes to the source are automatically reflected in the clones. This reduces redundancy, saves time, and ensures consistency in messaging.	insert that content across different posts and pages. Any future edits made to the reusable block will automatically update across all instances of that block on your site, and you can also manage, export, and import reusable blocks from a central library.
Hosting.	Since Cascade CMS is a "push" content management system, the application and database are hosted on a server (either centrally or locally), and the published content is hosted on separate, publicly-accessible web servers. Website content is managed using the Cascade application via a web browser, and the content is "published" to your chosen web hosting destination to be viewed by the public. The CMS application itself can be hosted on a university's IT infrastructure, or through a hosted cloud service.	WordPress sites can be hosted on a variety of platforms - web servers rented from a hosting provider, where all website files are stored and made accessible online. You can choose from various hosting options, including shared hosting (less expensive, but you share resources – not recommended) or managed WordPress hosting (more expensive, but the provider handles technical tasks and optimizes the environment for WordPress). The hosting company provides the server, software, and infrastructure needed for your WordPress website to run 24/7 and be visible to visitors.
Customizable Dashboards.	A Cascade CMS dashboard is the personalized landing page a user sees upon logging into the Hannon Hill Cascade Content Management System (CMS), serving as a central hub for managing website content. It provides a bird's-eye view of essential tasks, content, and notifications through customizable widgets, allowing users to quickly access their work, monitor site activity, and navigate to different areas of the CMS. Users can personalize their dashboards to display relevant information and tools, enhancing productivity.	The WordPress dashboard is the central control panel for your WordPress website. It's where you manage all aspects of your site, from creating and editing content to customizing its appearance and functionality. Think of it as the backstage area where you make all the behind-the-scenes magic happen. the WordPress dashboard is highly customizable through plugins, custom code, and built-in tools.
CMS Updates.	Cascade CMS is updated at two levels: content is updated by authorized users through the web interface by editing and submitting assets, while the software itself	WordPress is updated at two levels: content is updated by authorized users through the interface by editing and submitting assets, while WordPress software is updated

	is updated (functionality, security, performance, etc.) by administrators by downloading a new version from [Hannon Hill](), backing up the database and test environment, and running the installer to replace the old version.	(functionality, security, performance, etc.) by clicking a single "Update Now" button within the "Dashboard > Updates" screen of your WordPress admin dashboard for one-click updates, or by using an FTP client to manually replace the core WordPress files if preferred or if automatic updates fail. Automatic updates are available for security and minor releases, and can also be enabled for major releases and plugins, though a backup is recommended before any update.
Cost.	Cascade CMS comes with a paid, annual software subscription. The cost may vary based on site complexity, number of users, and integration needs. A Cascade CMS subscription provides a comprehensive package covering the core CMS functionality, cloud hosting infrastructure (for Cascade CMS application/database), ongoing software support and maintenance, and a range of features designed to enhance content creation, management, and delivery, catering to both technical users and content contributors. You may also pay additional costs for implementation, custom development, web hosting, and ongoing professional service support.	WordPress's open-source, core software is free, plan for additional costs for hosting (application, database, web servers), domain names, premium themes, and plugins, which are often needed for professional features and support. Other costs include security measures, ongoing site maintenance (technical & content), performance optimization for growing sites, scalability upgrades, and the ongoing developer help or training (to manage/support the collection of plugins and software upgrades). In addition, WordPress requires a well-architected and supported IT Change Management framework to control quality as changes move across development, test, and production environments. Skipping these investments can lead to performance issues, security vulnerabilities, and higher repair costs in the long run.
Pros.	**Easy to Use:** User reviews consistently praise Cascade CMS for its user-friendly design, which simplifies content management for teams, even those without extensive technical expertise. **Workflow and Permissions Control:** The platform excels in providing granular control over content publishing with its	**Flexibility:** WordPress is known for being highly customizable, allowing users to tailor their websites to their specific needs, from blogs to e-commerce sites. **Plugin Ecosystem:** Users consistently praise the extensive plugin library available, which extends the functionality of WordPress websites, offering solutions for various

intuitive workflow and permission settings, ensuring content accuracy and regulatory compliance.

Integration Friendly: Cascade CMS seamlessly integrates with popular third-party tools such as Google Analytics and SiteImprove, extending its functionality and streamlining workflows.

Strong Customer Support: Users highly commend the readily available and helpful customer service, ensuring any issues are addressed promptly and efficiently.

Flexible Content Management: The system's structured content editing and robust content type system empower users to manage complex page structures and content variations effectively.

business needs.

Community Support: A strong and active community provides ample resources, tutorials, and support forums, making it easier for users to find solutions and get help when needed.

Theme Availability: A vast selection of themes allows users to easily change the design and layout of their website, offering both free and paid options to suit different budgets.

User-Friendly Interface: WordPress is often commended for its intuitive interface, making it relatively easy for users to manage content, even without extensive technical expertise.

Cons.

Technical Expertise Needed: User reviews mention that Cascade CMS may not be suitable for users without technical expertise, especially for tasks like upgrades.

Cost: Significant license cost

Potential for Complexity: While its robust features are beneficial for large organizations, the complexity can be overwhelming for smaller teams or those with limited technical resources. Managing the system, including user roles, permissions, and workflows, requires a dedicated administrator, team, or partner with expertise in Cascade CMS.

Community Support: Smaller developer community than open-source options

Technical Issues: WordPress' reliance on third-party plugins and themes can lead to technical difficulties, especially for users without technical expertise. Troubleshooting plugin conflicts, theme compatibility, and website errors can be time-consuming and require additional support.

Security Vulnerabilities: The open-source nature of WordPress and its reliance on third-party plugins can create security vulnerabilities if not properly maintained. Regular updates, security plugins, and strong passwords are essential to mitigate these risks. WordPress is the target of ~90% of hacked CMS sites.

Website Maintenance: WordPress requires ongoing maintenance, including updating plugins, themes, and the core software (IT Team needed). Neglecting these updates can lead to security risks, performance issues, and compatibility problems, potentially disrupting business operations.

Features: Fewer built-in enterprise features

		(complex workflows, access controls) Performance: Can degrade without proper caching/CDN implementation **Community Support:** May be time-consuming.
Notable Users.	Clemson University, Auburn University, Texas A&M University, University of Miami, William & Mary, Ole Miss (University of Mississippi), Miami University, Eastern Connecticut State University, Husson University, North Carolina A&T University, Atlantic Cape Community College, Macomb Community College, Guilford Technical Community College, and many community colleges, and smaller private institutions	University of Washington, Harvard University, Stanford University, MIT, Princeton University, Georgia State University, Boise State University, University of Maine, Northwestern University, Vanderbilt University, UCLA, Boston University, Northern Virginia Community College, Johnson County Community College, and many community colleges, and smaller private institutions
Which One Should I Choose?	Choose Cascade CMS if you need a robust, enterprise-level CMS for you institution with complex content management needs, strong governance, workflow automation, and/or structured content reuse are priorities. Choose Cascade CMS if you value superior security measures and granular user permissions and/or if you have the budget for enterprise software and specialized development skills.	Choose WordPress if you are a beginner or a small to mid-sized college looking for a user-friendly and flexible platform, and you prefer assistance from a large and active community. Choose WordPress if you want extensive customization options through a vast theme and plugin ecosystem, and/or cost-effectiveness and ease of use are important factors.