HEADER IMAGE SELECTION

GUIDE TO CHOOSING AND ALTERING HEADER IMAGES FOR RED WEBSITES

When choosing banner images, there are aspects that will need to be considered to make sure that these important elements look proper and convey a sense of identity for your department as well as creating way-finding within your site.

In addition, one of the major features of the RED WordPress template system is its automatic responsive design. This makes the site more accessible on all devices, but presents some challenges requiring graphics, especially horizontal headers.

The following guidelines can help you choose the best images to represent your department as well as making informed decisions regarding adjustments to make them perfect. **It is especially recommended that you explore the** Creative Options **section if you are having difficulties finding the perfect image for your headers.** The solution may come from using images in ways that hadn't been considered previously.
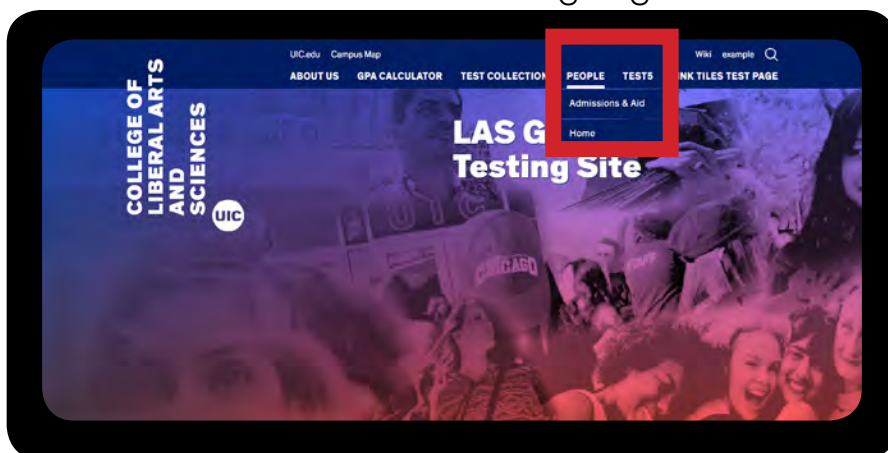
HOME VS LANDING PAGE HEADERS

Home and Landing Page Headers are all 1440 pixels wide for the Type B RED websites. And they each fulfill unique roles in your site design. You will want your Home Page Header to say visually as much about your department/ site as is possible in very broad ways. On the other hand, your Landing Page Headers should focus down to the specifics of that section of your site and not be generic in their purpose.
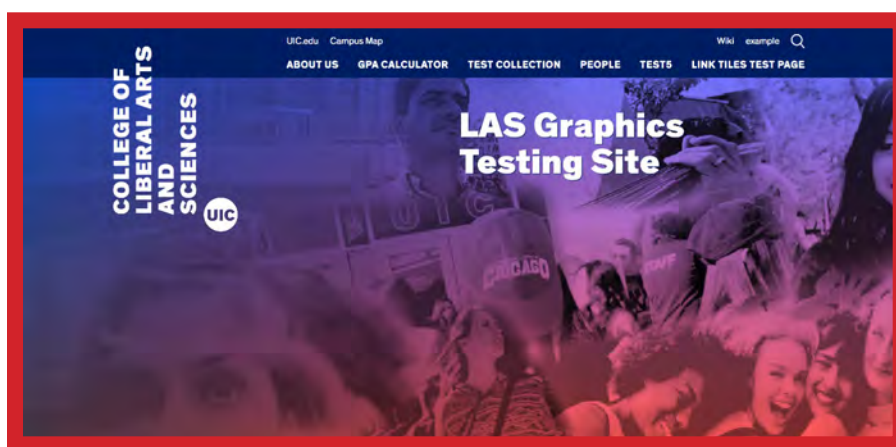
HOME PAGE HEADER
1440x420 pixels

Landing Page Menu

Although it's not necessary to utilize a Landing Page background image, it is highly recommended. The addition of proper landing page graphics can help users recognize the main areas of your site for better navigation as well as giving more stylistic appeal.

LANDING PAGE HEADER
1440x166 pixels

ASPECT RATIO

Most photographs have a ratio of 4:3 or 3:2 when originally shot, so when cropping them for header usage, large portions of the top and bottom will usually need to be eliminated. For example, most pictures that include portions of the campus and the downtown Chicago skyline in the background are very difficult, if not impossible to use as header images without eliminating either the campus or skyline elements. This is especially true for the landing page headers (type B) as their aspect ratio is actually 720:83. The department home page headers (type B) are a bit more forgiving at 24:7 but are still challenging.

As a comparison, this chart shows the different ratios and how severely the RED system limits the vertical content of an original image:

Ratio 4:3 (COMMON ORIGINAL)

Ratio 3:2 (COMMON ORIGINAL)

Ratio 24:7 (HOME PAGE, TYPE B)

Ratio 720:83 (LANDING PAGE, TYPE B)

WORKING WITH VERTICAL CONTENT

You will want to keep in mind how images that have important vertical content will need to be altered to work as header backgrounds.

So using our example of the campus/skyline situation, following are suggested options of how a 3:2 image can be cropped in different ways to be used as RED home page and landing headers. Notice how each option focuses upon different parts of the original image and would then express different representations to the end user.

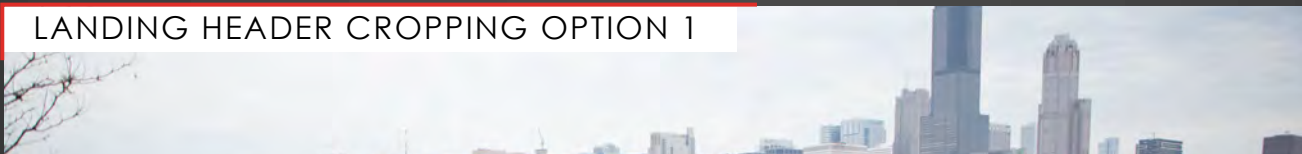ORIGINAL IMAGE - RATIO 3:2

HOME HEADER CROPPING OPTION 1

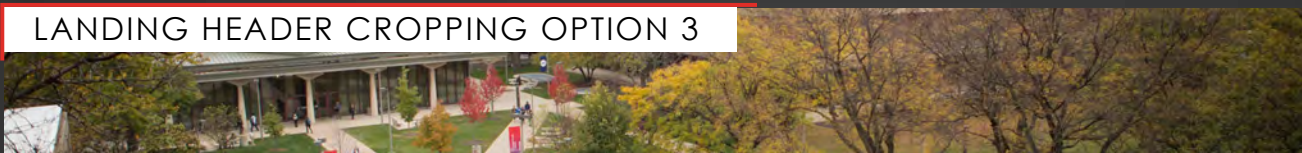HOME HEADER CROPPING OPTION 2

HOME HEADER CROPPING OPTION 3

LANDING HEADER CROPPING OPTION 1

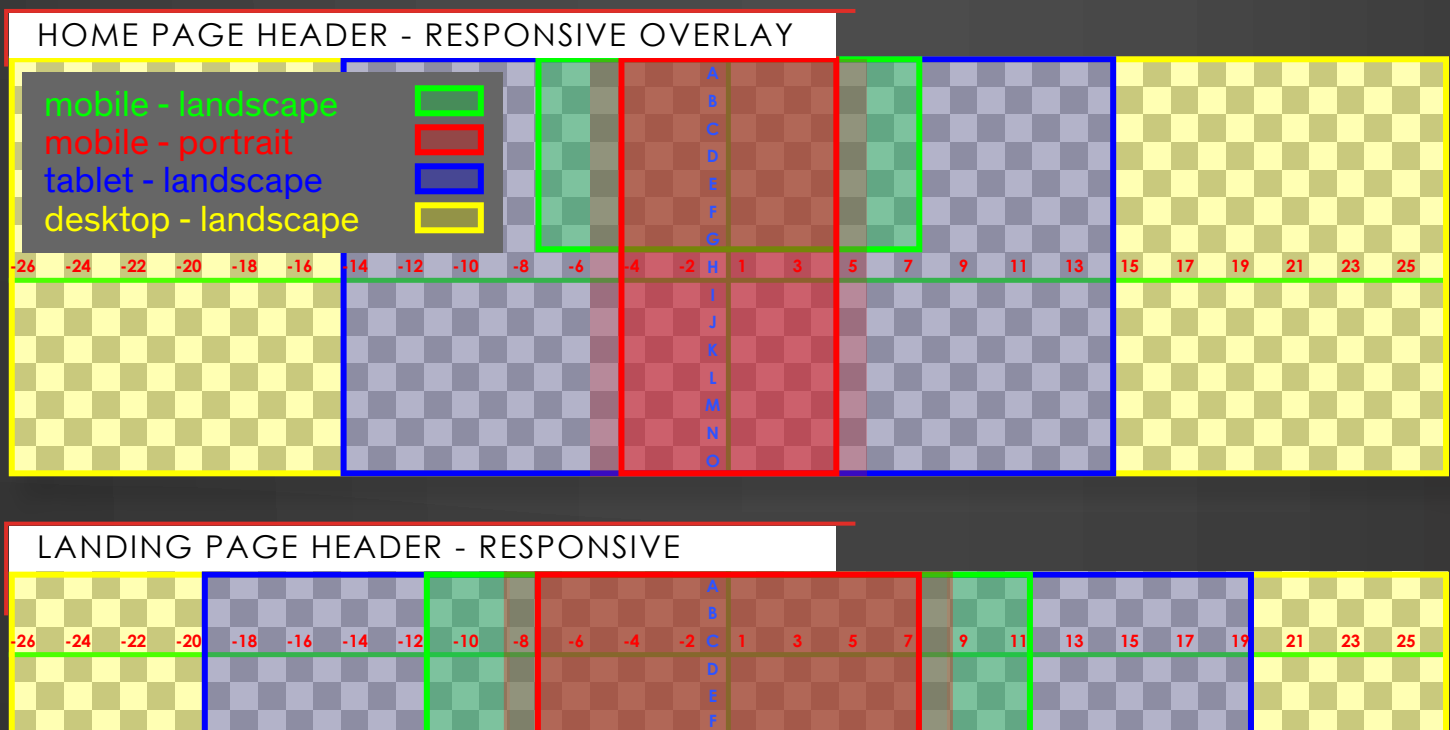LANDING HEADER CROPPING OPTION 2

LANDING HEADER CROPPING OPTION 3

RESPONSIVE DESIGN EFFECT & CONSIDERATIONS

Generally speaking, the best header images will be able to be broken down into thirds horizontally and in half, vertically. The center third should be the main area and the two flanking thirds should contain content that is disposable. Even further, the content of the landing page headers should be chosen very carefully as the height limitation can result in items getting cropped from the top and bottom.

The following pages are a series of different images chosen to show both good and bad examples of these concepts. All images are shown in the following states:

- Original Ratio

- Resized and Cropped for Home Page Header

- Resized and Cropped for Landing Page Header

- With Responsive Overlay (these colored rectangles show what content is visible when the page headers are viewed on mobile and tablets)

HOME PAGE HEADER - RESPONSIVE OVERLAY

mobile - landscape
mobile - portrait
tablet - landscape
desktop - landscape

LANDING PAGE HEADER - RESPONSIVE

Content Layout Example Set 01

ORIGINAL IMAGE

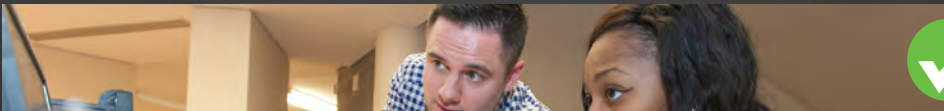Resized/cropped for home page header
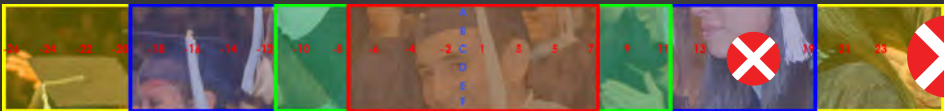
Responsive overlay guide added

mobile - landscape
mobile - portrait
tablet - landscape
desktop - landscape

Resized/cropped for landing page header

Responsive overlay guide added

Content Layout Example Set 02

ORIGINAL IMAGE

Resized/cropped for home page header ✅

Responsive overlay guide added

mobile - landscape
mobile - portrait
tablet - landscape
desktop - landscape

❌

Resized/cropped for landing page header ❌

Responsive overlay guide added ❌

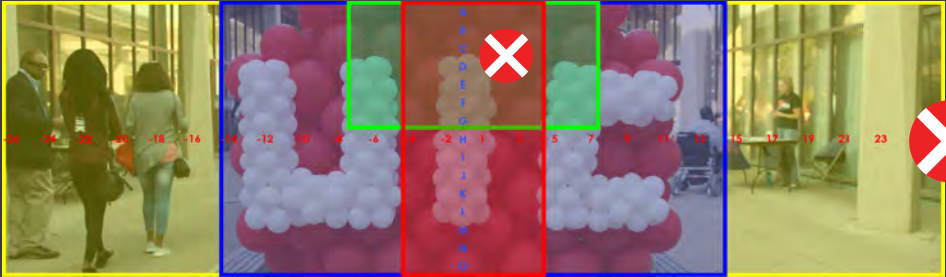## Content Layout Example Set 03

ORIGINAL IMAGE

Resized/cropped for home page header

Responsive overlay guide added

mobile - landscape
mobile - portrait
tablet - landscape
desktop - landscape

Resized/cropped for landing page header

Responsive overlay guide added

Content Layout Example Set 04

ORIGINAL IMAGE

Resized/cropped for home page header ✅
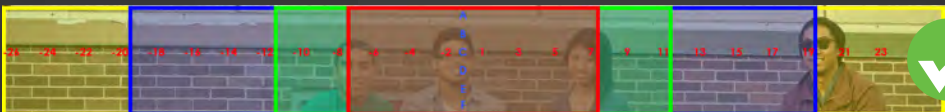
Responsive overlay guide added ❌

mobile - landscape
mobile - portrait
tablet - landscape
desktop - landscape

Resized/cropped for landing page header ❌

Responsive overlay guide added ❌

Content Layout Example Set 05

ORIGINAL IMAGE

Resized/cropped for home page header

Responsive overlay guide added

mobile - landscape
mobile - portrait
tablet - landscape
desktop - landscape

Resized/cropped for landing page header

Responsive overlay guide added

Content Layout Example Set 06

ORIGINAL IMAGE

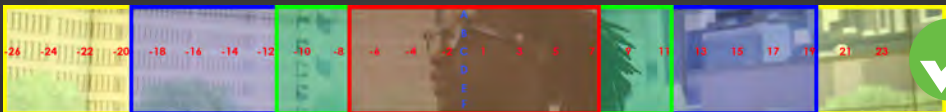Resized/cropped for home page header

Responsive overlay guide added

mobile - landscape
mobile - portrait
tablet - landscape
desktop - landscape

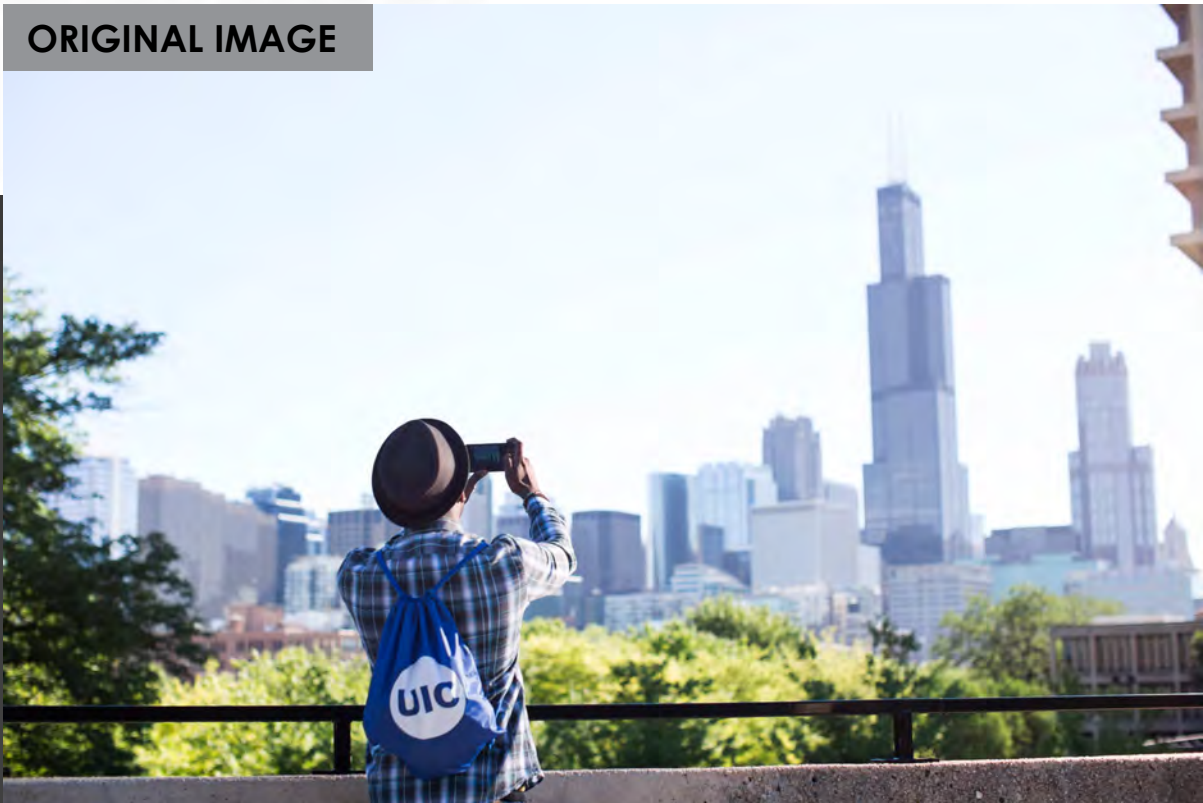Resized/cropped for landing page header

Responsive overlay guide added

Content Layout Example Set 07
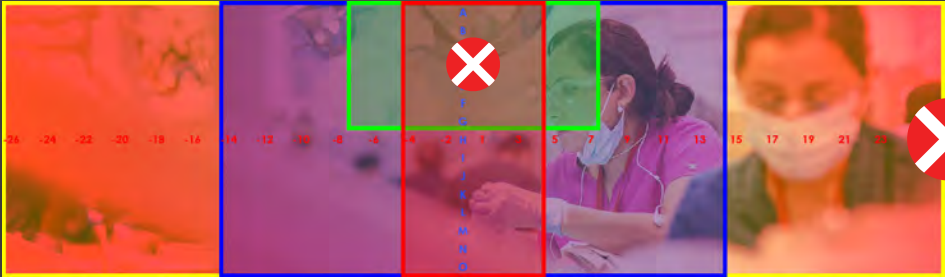
ORIGINAL IMAGE

Resized/cropped for home page header

Responsive overlay guide added

mobile - landscape
mobile - portrait
tablet - landscape
desktop - landscape

Resized/cropped for landing page header

Responsive overlay guide added

Content Layout Example Set 08

ORIGINAL IMAGE

Resized/cropped for home page header

Responsive overlay guide added

mobile - landscape
mobile - portrait
tablet - landscape
desktop - landscape
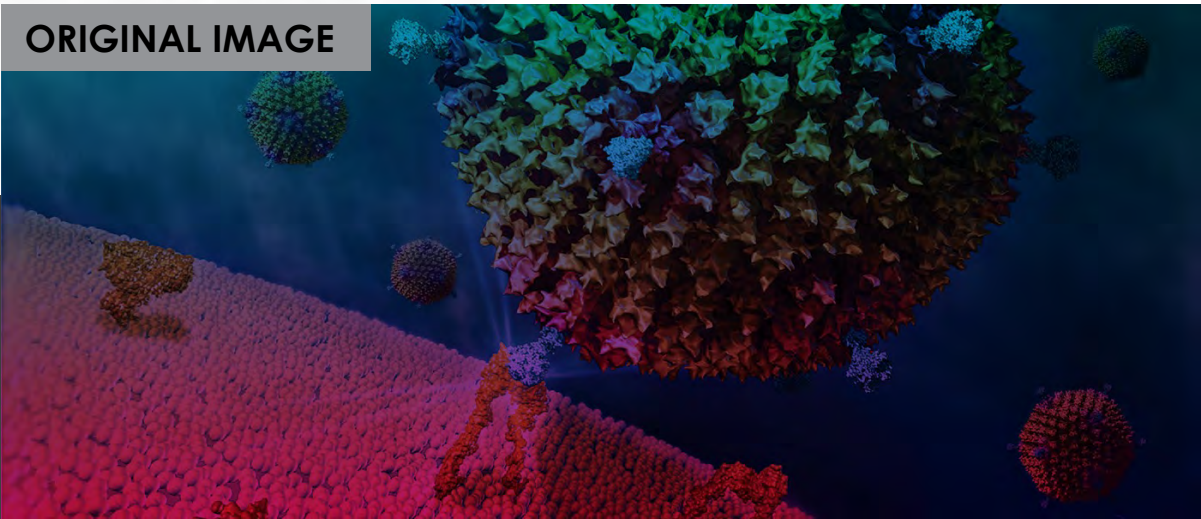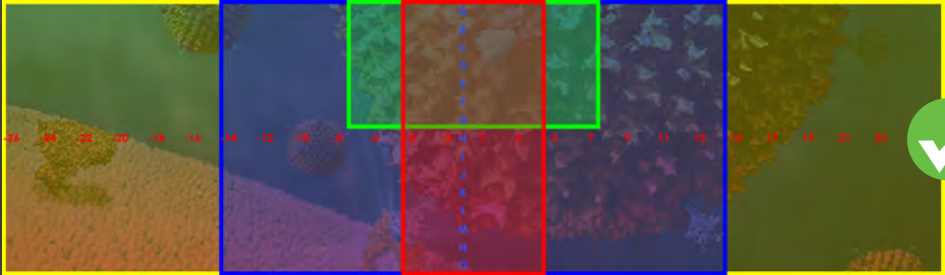

Resized/cropped for landing page header

Responsive overlay guide added

Content Layout Example Set 09

ORIGINAL IMAGE

Resized/cropped for home page header ✅
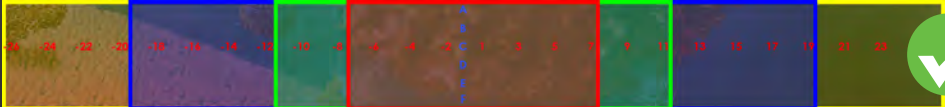
Responsive overlay guide added

mobile - landscape
mobile - portrait
tablet - landscape
desktop - landscape
✅

**Resized/cropped for landing page header** ✅

Responsive overlay guide added ✅

CREATIVE OPTIONS (EXAMPLES)

Sometimes no creative resizing or cropping of a single image will be a good option to create a header background. But that doesn't mean that it can't still be used in some sort of way for a perfect header. As the vertical distance available is limited in headers, smaller 4:3 images can be arranged together as sets to create collages or panoramas.

Other easy options for making an image work better include adding gradients and blurs or simply flipping the orientation. Check out the next few pages for examples of options that are available to spark ideas or create some interesting solutions.
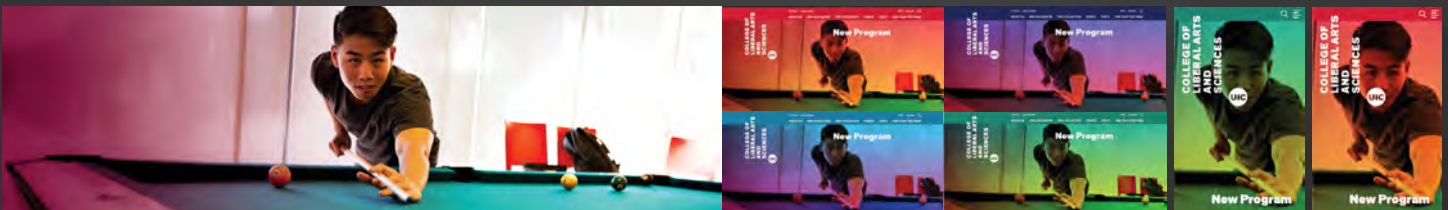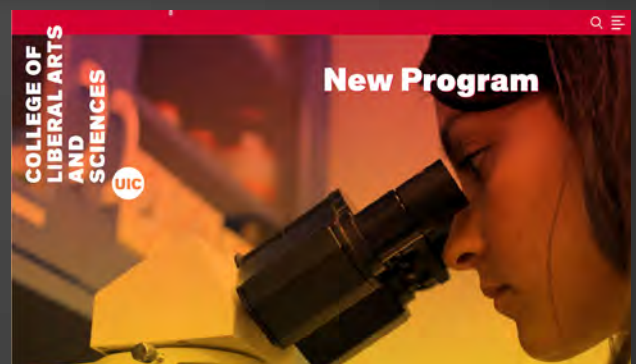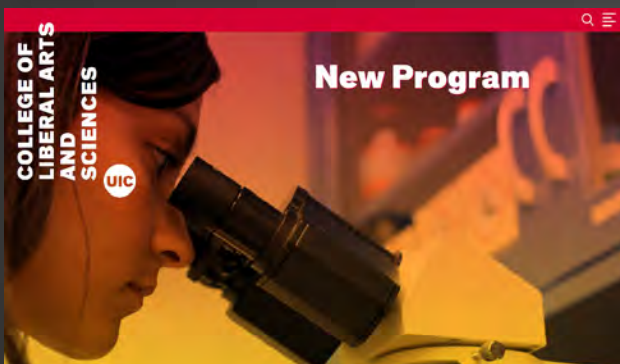
COMBINED IMAGES (COLLAGES)

Collages are one of the easiest options for creating a long horizontal banner out of 4:3 ratio images or images of any dimension. This approach can also create composite images that say more about your site or sections of your site in ways that a single picture never could. Images can be separated distinctly or blended together.

ORIGINAL IMAGES:
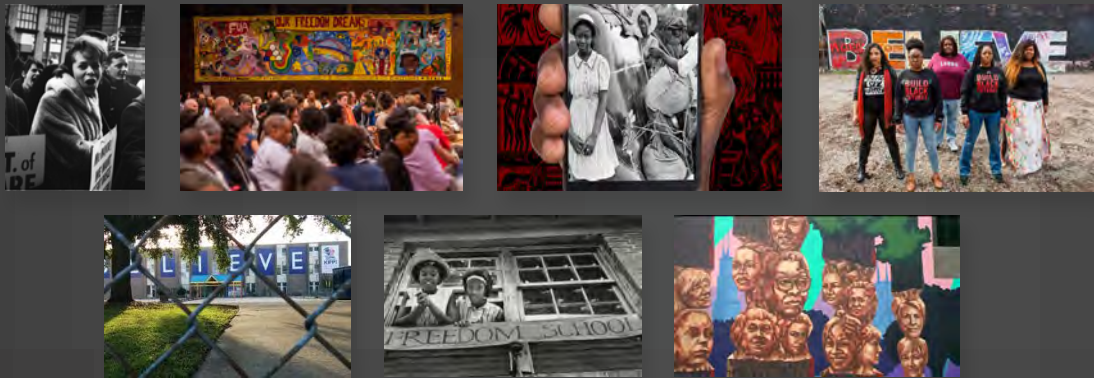
COLLAGE OPTIONS:

PANORAMAS

Panoramic images can either be shot with a wide-aspect or fisheye lens. They can also be created by using a series of photos shot from a singular viewpoint. Below are samples of images that were shot by using a quality camera on a tripod and then processed into panoramas in Adobe Lightroom (or Photoshop). Regardless of camera type, any series of images that have been shot from the same origin can possibly work (although use of a tripod makes it more likely).

ORIGINAL IMAGES & PANORAMA 01:

### ORIGINAL IMAGES & PANORAMA 02:


ORIGINAL IMAGES & PANORAMA 03:

ORIENTATION

If the left-hand side of a banner image doesn't work well with the department logo text, then it may be better to simply flip the image horizontally if no text is shown within the image. This is not recommended if you are using images of campus buildings, anything that has visible text or in any situation where it is obvious that the image has been flipped. This can also a simple matter of taste or preferences regarding the orientation of the image.
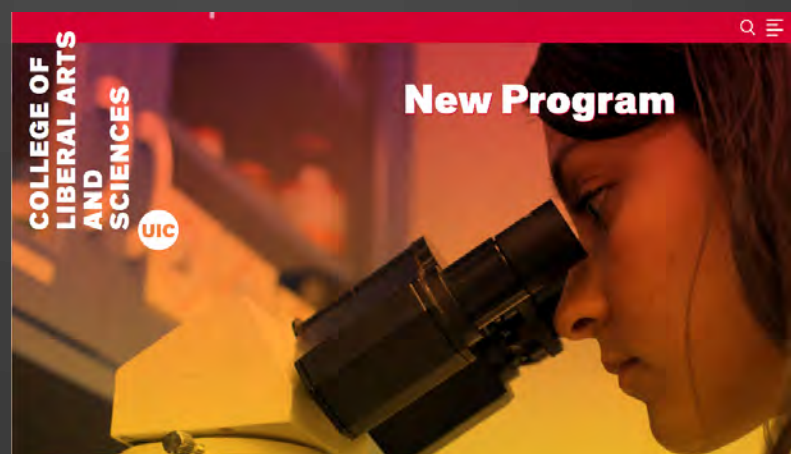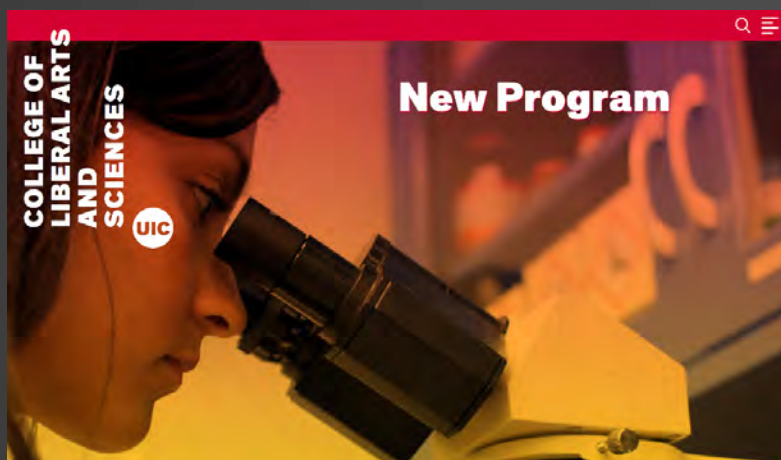
CONTRAST, GRADIENTS & BLURS

Although the RED sites will automatically apply a color wash gradient to any header images, it is still possible to add simple contrast adjustments, gradients and/or blurs that work independently of the RED feature. This may be a suitable solution for any image that has content along the left-hand side, making the UIC logo and department logotype difficult to read. Adding these simple adjustments can also be a nice aesthetic choice to give your site more style.
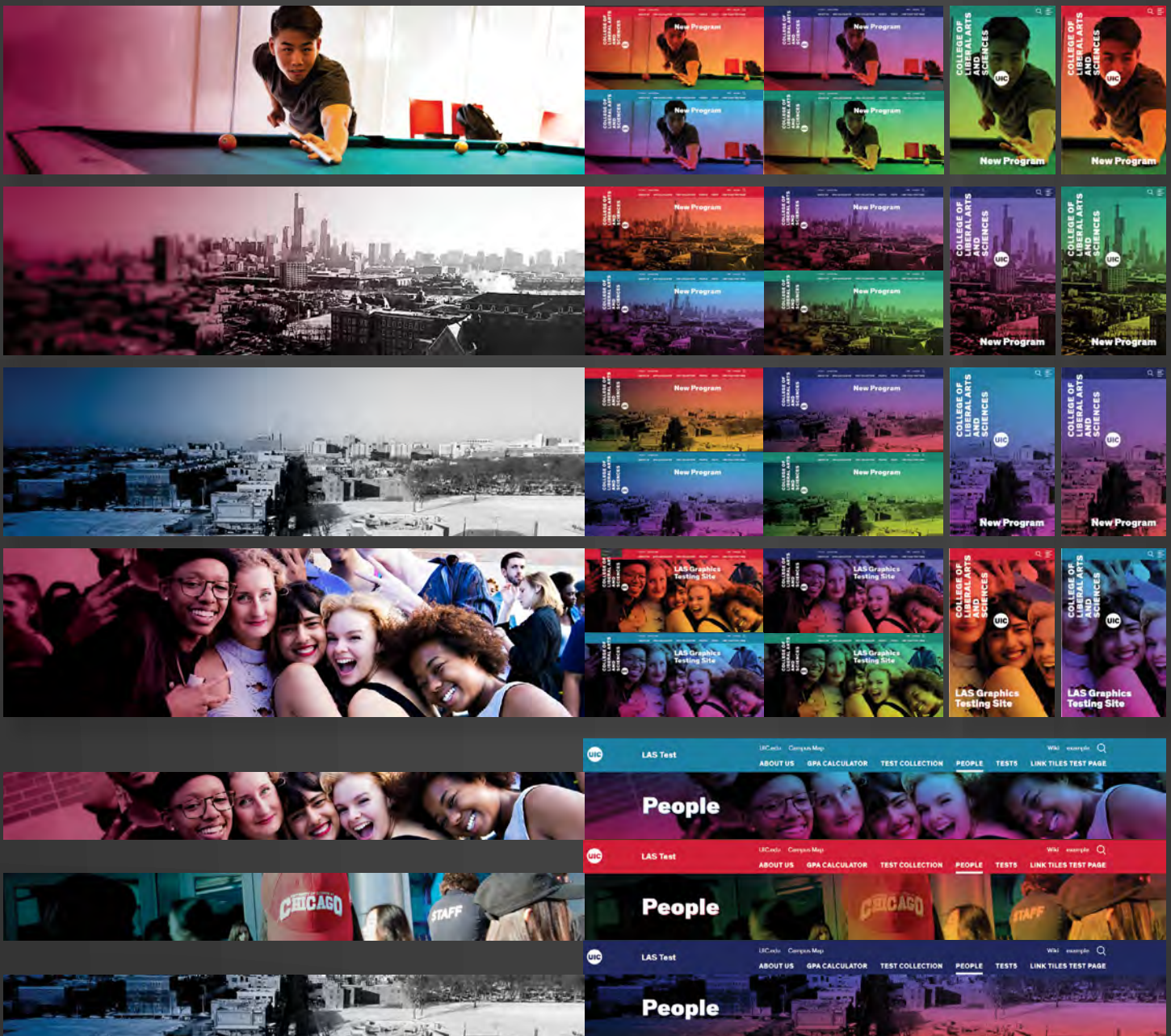
CLOSING

We encourage everyone working upon LAS RED sites to explore various creative options when designing graphical content. It can help your sites stand out to both prospective students and also bring attention to content for all users. And the LAS Graphics Department is here to help you.

This guide is really just the starting point for your process regarding header images, so if you have any questions, please reach out to Troy Larsen in the LAS Graphics department at tlarsen@uic.edu

And if you are ready to submit images to be adjusted for your RED site or would like specialty images created, just open a Help Desk ticket by sending email directly to lasweb@uic.edu

DISCLAIMER

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Header Image Selection Guide - LAS Graphics

LAS Wordpress Red Migration Team Resources

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