RED WEBSITE GUIDELINES

DEAR LAS FACULTY AND STAFF:

UIC

Under a 2019 campus mandate, all websites affiliated to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) now operate on a customized WordPress platform called RED. The RED project was created to improve the overall consistency, branding, user experience, and security of all UIC websites. Full details can be found at **http://red.uic.edu**.

The LAS IT team and LAS Marketing & Communications work together to ensure that all existing and new websites meet RED standards. Please consider this document a working guide for RED support (with routine updates to follow).

PURPOSE

LAS websites provide information about the College to a variety of stakeholders, including prospective students and their families, current students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, the media, and the general public.

Our website is our "e-brochure"—a first impression and the first introduction that many will have to our College. Therefore, all RED sites should convey our distinctive strengths and tell a story that provides clear, accurate, and timely information for all web visitors.

GOALS

These LAS web guidelines are designed to help all departments:

Showcase the welcoming and supportive LAS community (e.g., staff/faculty/student relationships, diversity, etc.).	Clearly convey the LAS mission.	Present a unified brand and family of departments.	Encourage web users to take ACTION (e.g., apply, visit, attend an event, request info, donate, etc.).
	Foster engagement through imagery, video, and compelling stories	Offer accurate, consistent, and timely information.	
Show the wide range of academic and research opportunities available at LAS	Support LAS' advancement efforts and inspire new donors and College champions	Promote the LAS calendar of events and unique learning opportunities	Celebrate our College's successes and forward movement.

KEEP IN MIND

- WordPress training is offered through UIC. All content managers should plan to attend to better understand the functionality of our new web platform. Please visit **http://red.uic.edu/contact to schedule a session**.

- RED sites feature dynamic response, meaning that our new sites have the ability to adapt to any screen resolution and will look great on any device!

- This is a great chance to update content. Web copy is most persuasive when it is simple and aligned with audience needs and interests. Your web content will also support future LAS marketing efforts.

- Balance matters. Think in terms of clean design and thoughtful copy that minimizes scrolling (check out tabs, accordions, and other components available in RED).

- Focus on showing versus telling. Include narratives that help others "see" the main idea. First-person accounts, student videos, and action photos encourage personal interest in the College.

- Consider "calls-to-action." Think about prospective students, special events, and ways to deepen connections beyond mere readership.

- Remember that your current Sitefinity website must be fully maintained until your new RED site is approved and made live. Please plan accordingly.

- Collaboration is key. LAS is here when and if you need help! Email **LASweb@uic.edu** for support.

LAS RED Team:

Ron Versetto
(*IT Director*)

Jannie Kirby (*Marketing & Communications Director*)

Scott Rozman
(*IT Manager*)

Myrna Romero
(*LAS Graphic Designer*)

GETTING STARTED

The RED website creation process is simple.

1 Departments will have complete an initial planning meeting with IT and Marketing and Communications. This includes a review of your existing website and departmental needs, and discussion of RED website capabilities.

2 Departments will receive a LAS RED template to serve as the springboard for their new site. A few sample images and text are included as examples and should be edited and customized as you see fit.

3 All groups should determine who will require access to the RED site (e.g., administrator, editor, etc.). Designated web content managers should schedule and attend a UIC WordPress training. Everyone involved in the RED migration project is encouraged to attend. To schedule a training, visit **http://red.uic.edu/contact.**

→ Be sure to bookmark **http://red.uic. edu/transition-to-red** updates and visit often for the latest news about RED features.

4 After training, departments will begin to build their new sites, which may or may not include migrating existing content from older Sitefinity websites. Please note that it is the responsibility of each department to ensure that all site information is accurate and adheres to College policies.

TIP: Please DO NOT copy and paste directly from your existing site or MS Word as this will bring in unwanted HTML and disrupt your new page(s). Copy content to Notepad or use the "Paste as Plain Text" paste feature in WordPress for best results.

6 Once the build is complete, a technical review will be conducted by LAS IT to check for HTML or image issues, accessibility challenges, etc. If approved, the site will go "live" and become public facing.

5 Departments will maintain their own content and continue annual reviews for accessibility checks, and technical updates.

For general questions or support, email LASweb@uic.edu.

HOMEPAGES

LAS websites will be most successful when users can **1)** find what they're looking for, **2)** understand what they find, **3)** act on that understanding, and **4)** do all of these within the amount of time they are willing to spend.

Homepages are the first stop for those seeking online information. The homepage of your departmental template will be preloaded with placeholder images and content to serve as a model. Please customize the template as you see fit.

Some features are considered standard such as a link to the LAS homepage and a link to **UIC.edu**.

Each department has the autonomy to create a homepage that suits its needs and provides access to commonly sought content. However, the following components are highly recommended to help ensure a pleasant and informative user experience across LAS.

• Welcome/Overview

• Feature image or video

• News

• Calendar/Events

• Additional content as deemed appropriate

LANDING PAGES

Landing pages constitute the core of your sites content. Think of them as umbrella categories.

All departments should determine the specific needs of users and consider how web categories should be organized. Links to landing pages appear prominently in the central navigation at the top of the home page.

Departments have autonomy in determining page content but are asked to keep in mind the following common types of information that LAS visitors may seek:

• Prospective student info (both undergraduate and graduate). Please add a link to the UIC Admissions page found at **https://admissions.uic.edu**.

• Current student info

• Upcoming events

• Current news

• Links to course and/or degree info. Links to the UIC Academic Catalog are encouraged to eliminate the need for continuous manual updates.
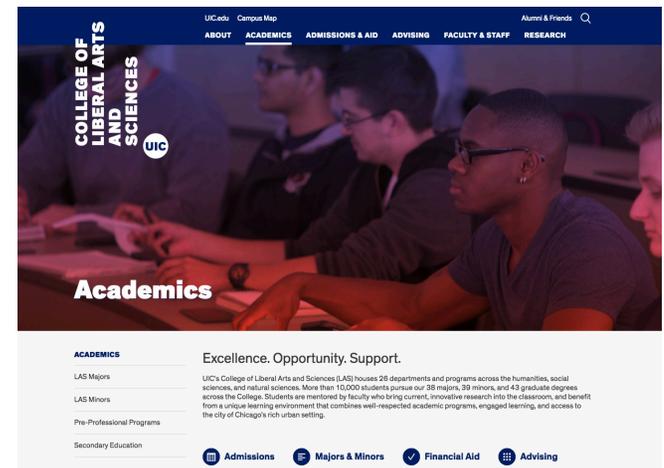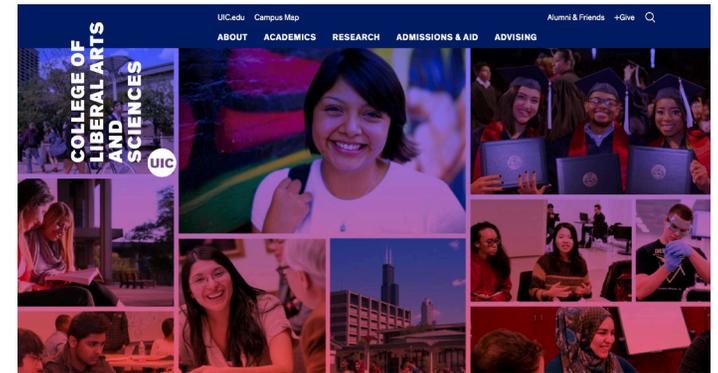
BUILDING PAGES

A WordPress demo is offered through the RED training and will answer many basic questions. Even if you are familiar with WordPress, plan to attend a training as RED is a customized version of the tool. It may also be helpful to bookmark **http://www.red.uic.edu** and refer to it as you work.

Page Components allow you to create the body of each page. **Post Types** are used for News, Events, and Profiles. Profiles work well for faculty information such as biographies and links to published work.

See all features at http://red.uic.edu/transition-to-red/available-functions-in-red.

REMEMBER – When moving existing Sitefinity content into RED, "paste as plain text" or use Notepad to remove the current formatting. This will prevent HTML issues later.

Questions? Email Lasweb@uic.edu.

NAVIGATION/MENUS
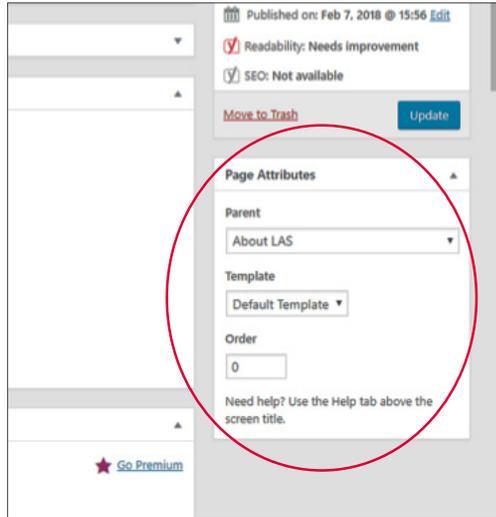
In RED, it is important to specify the parent-child relationship of your pages. **Landing Pages** will be your primary categories (e.g., courses, seminars, news). These are typically "parent" pages. **Default or Subpages** fall under each landing page and are thought of as "child" pages.

When building a new page, it is important to specify the parent page in the right-hand section called "Page Attributes" (see below). *This will also be covered in the RED trainings*.
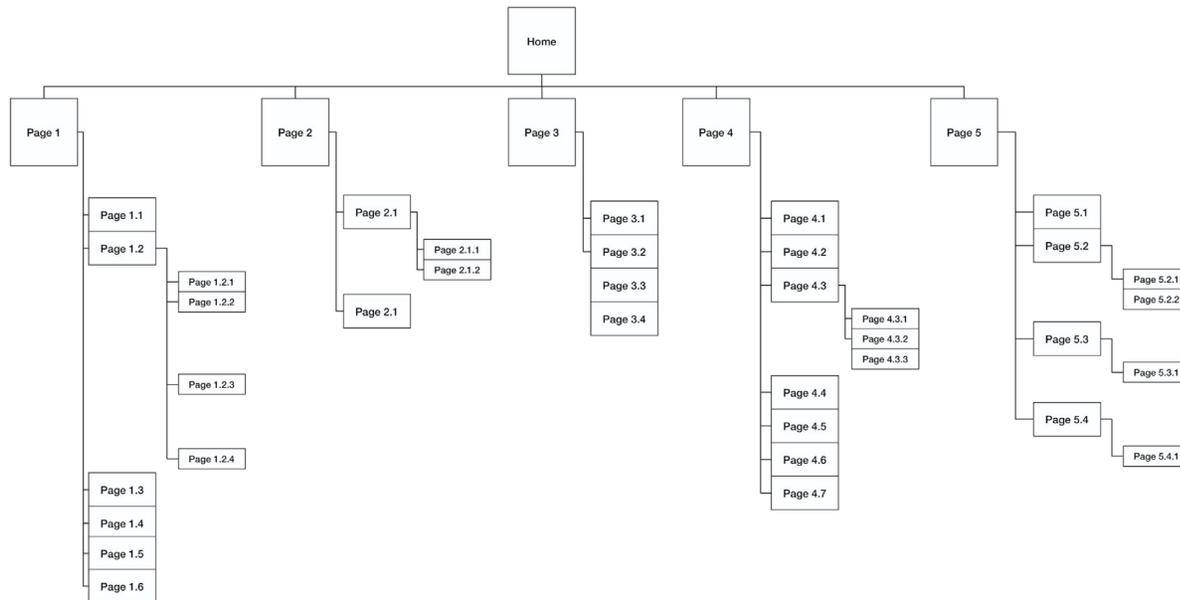
RED sites only display one level of subpages from the top navigation of the site. Additional levels of subpages will appear in a left-hand menu format, and it is very important to specify the proper parent-child relationship for each new page.

The over-arching RED site menu is managed from the MENUS tab that appears on the left-hand side of your WordPress dashboard. The **Main Menu** controls the central navigation for the site. **Eyebrow Menus** are the thin extra navigation at the very top of the site. Page names display from right to left in the eyebrow menu and work best when kept very short.

WEB ACCESSIBILITY

UIC is committed to ensuring that its websites are accessible and usable for all, and RED websites have been designed to be compliant with both the federal Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act (IITAA).

RED sites require alternative text for all images and have limited automated features that would reduce the time some users need to absorb content. These measures help those who use assistive technologies, allowing them to have a high-quality web experience without losing meaning as they explore your web content.

LAS IT encourages departments to follow best practices for accessibility on their websites and the use of the University of Illinois Functional Accessibility Evaluator (FAE) 2.0 for testing and reporting. Here are a few things you can do to ensure that your site is accessible:

• Provide text alternatives for non-text/graphic content.

• Make sure that all functionality is available from a keyboard.

• Use closed-caption enabled videos or make the text transcript available.

All new RED sites will be tested to ensure compliance with accessibility standards prior to final approval.

Questions? Visit **accessweb@uic.edu** or email **LASweb@uic.edu.**

BRANDING

LAS will continue to adhere to the over-arching style guide set forth by UIC that includes, but is not limited to, the use of logos, colors and fonts.

UIC Branding & Style Guide: **http://bit.ly/2EjH4Fy**

College & Program Logos: **http://bit.ly/2Cenbhf**

MESSAGING TIPS

Content being migrated from Sitefinity should be reviewed before adding it to the new RED websites.

→ Have program titles or the roles of certain faculty, staff, or other contacts changed?

→ Do official dates and/or stats require revision?

→ Are links working or have some URLs changed?

→ Do links open a new window or tab?

→ What's missing? Is it time for new content, features, highlights, or other information?

Web experts agree that the best approach to copywriting for digital platforms is focusing on "bite-sized" info and bold headlines. Web users tend to skim pages versus reading word-for-word.

Provide a positive user experience by keeping these best practices in mind:

• Less is more. Web content should be 50% of its written equivalent. This reduces page scrolling and makes online reading more enjoyable.

• Develop content according to your target audience. Before starting each page, ask the question: *"What audience need does this meet?"*

• Lead with your best material. Group related info together under relevant, meaningful headlines help organize the webpage, guide the eye, and explain to users what's there.

• Avoid long text blocks. Lists, tabs, and short paragraphs are much more inviting, particularly for mobile device users.

• Hyperlink actual text instead of long URLS or phrases such as "click here". Consider "Learn more about our biology program." This offers context and clarity.

• Make sure messages can be easily understood by all audiences. Think of those who are unfamiliar with certain academic language, industry acronyms, etc.

• Ask a colleague or fellow RED team member to proofread content. Fresh eyes are helpful.

• Questions? Reach out to Jannie Kirby, LAS Marketing and Communications Director, for support at **jkirby1@uic.edu**.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

RED sites include a Yoast® SEO Plugin to aid in search engine optimization, also known as SEO.

SEO helps websites gain free or "organic" traffic from search results on major search engines such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo. Natural search results are shown and ranked based on what the search engine considers most relevant to users. A good SEO strategy helps increase a page's visibility with web audiences by presenting it in search engine results more often. Best of all, it's free!

In editing mode, visit the Yoast section at the bottom of the page view and enter relevant keywords within the Meta Description. It is also helpful to consider ways to weave topical keywords throughout the page text.

A full explanation of this feature is available at **http://red.uic.edu/help** under "Administrative Functions." For support, please email **LASweb@uic.edu**.

COPYRIGHTS

All RED sites automatically include reference to the appropriate copyright year and approval by The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois.

Student information or Student work must have the student's prior permission before publication on a website.

Be cautious of using random sources of information and pictures to complement your content. Ensure that the appropriate permissions and/or licenses for commercial use have been secured and, if required, that information sources are properly cited and referenced.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Adding images and videos to your content makes it richer and more engaging. Royalty-free, high resolution images from the public domain or LAS specific photos are recommended.

- General photography is available for LAS faculty and staff use at LAS Photo Library. Note that UIC requires the use of release forms with photography subjects. The necessary forms are available online at **http://bit.ly/2ioUXse**.

- RED has certain specifications for image sizes for page headers and other features. To see a full list of photo specs, visit **http://red.uic.edu/resources**. High-resolution images work best (72 DPI and under 180 KB).

For support with image sizing or if you have questions, please email **LASweb@uic.edu**.

MULTIMEDIA

Web videos allow you to showcase your department's personality and help to strengthen the bond with audiences. RED is video enabled, making it easier to quickly deliver your message in a compelling way. Here are a couple of quick tips...

- Any selected video should flow with the overall LAS brand and be of sound viewing quality.

- Short videos work best. One to three minutes is best for holding the viewer's interest.

- The LAS YouTube channel is a resource. More videos will be available in the year ahead. Visit our channel at **http://bit.ly/2nVUktE**.

- Video captions are important for accessibility for the hearing impaired. The process is simple. See a helpful, quick video on this process at **http://bit.ly/2HSilNo**.

New RED features are constantly being added as the University responds to the needs and concerns of all Colleges. LAS is in regular communication with UIC's RED team regarding our "wish list" for certain features and functionality.

We appreciate your understanding and patience as we continue to improve our sites. Be sure to bookmark **red.uic.edu** for news and special announcements.

Email LASweb@uic.edu for support.