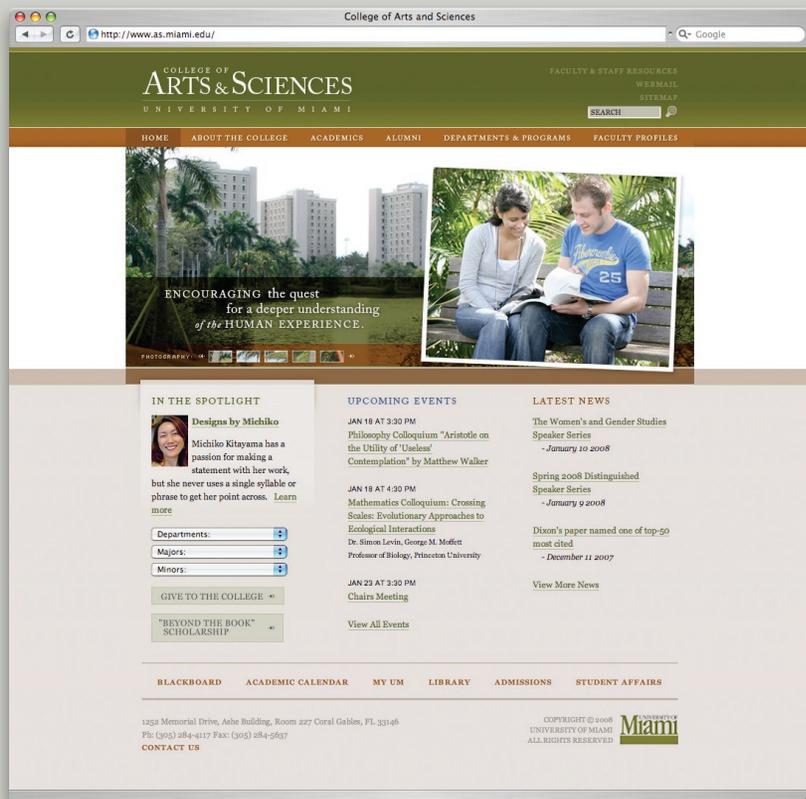


Lessons from a beautiful site



The University of Miami College of Arts & Sciences shows that beauty really is in the details. *Continued* ►

Lessons from a beautiful site

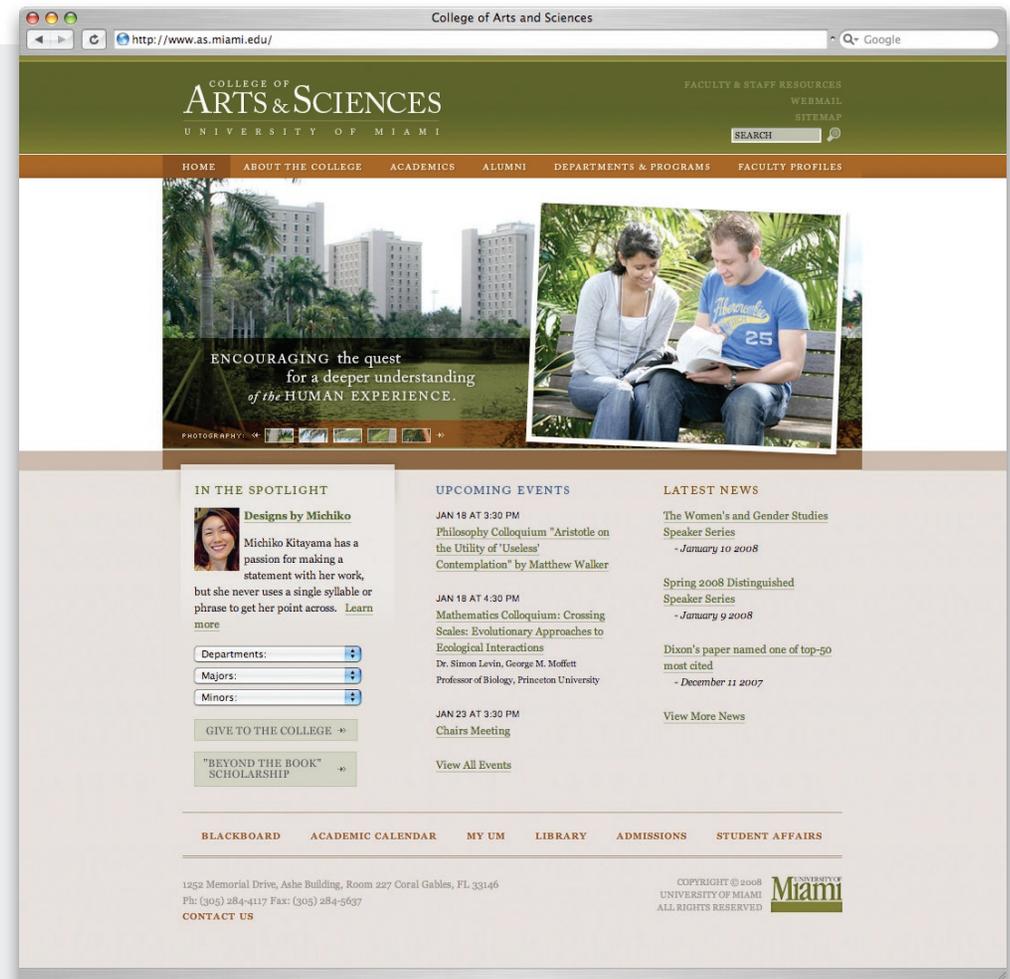
The University of Miami College of Arts & Sciences site shows that beauty really is in the details.

The best design is simple design: an idea, an image, a few words, open space. It's clear, attractive, memorable.

But real life is not often simple; it's full of *stuff*. People, programs and commerce all need attention and screen space, and this can make for a busy, complex site.

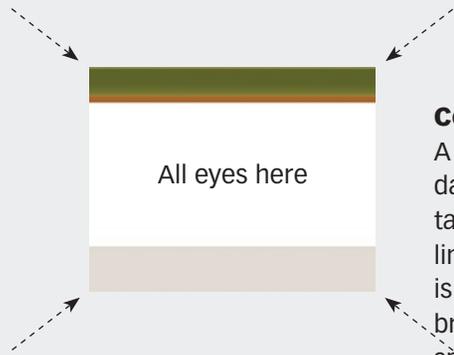
What we like about the University of Miami's College of Arts & Sciences site is that it handles complexity beautifully. It does this in two ways: It reduces each element to its essence (the simple thing), then it beautifully crafts the details. A dozen visual techniques allow its many parts to coexist effortlessly. Let's look at a few.

Home page Two dozen elements and links easily coexist on this inviting, visually coherent page.



Structure

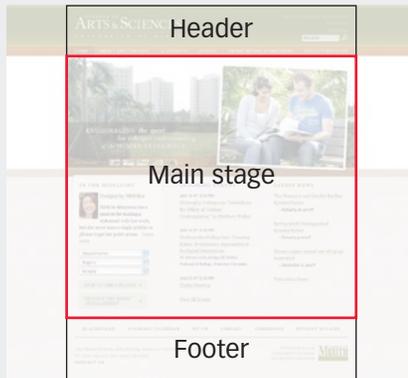
The site is conveniently screen size, not too long, so most of it is always visible. It is organized in three horizontal sections; each holds a different kind of information—permanent stuff top and bottom, active stuff in the middle.



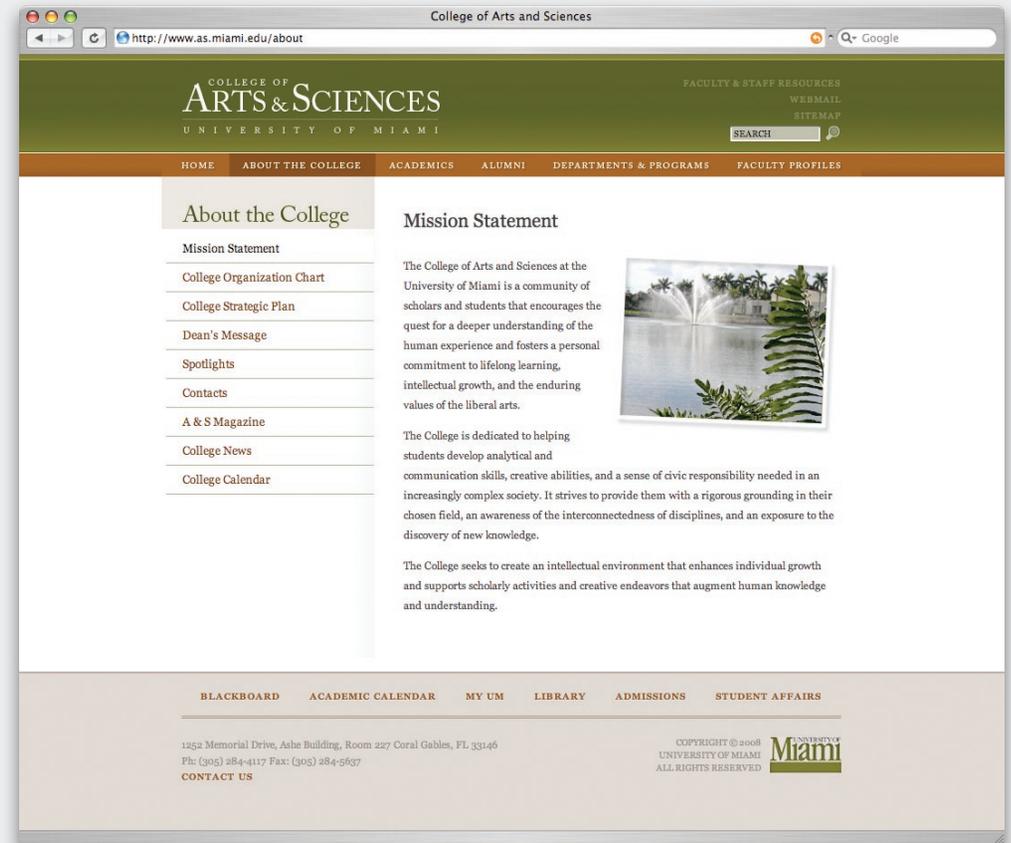
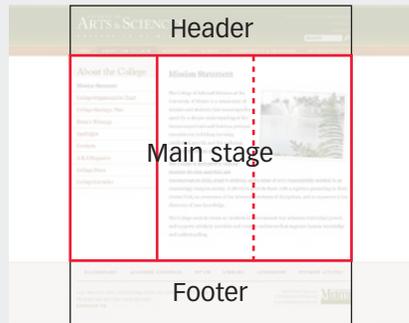
Color differentiates the sections

A white “center stage” is flanked by a dark header and light footer. These contain the foundational elements—logo, links, search and so on. The white center is active, with transitory stories, news briefs, stuff like that. Left, a screen-size space like this conveys a tight, organized impression and is easier to read than a scrolling page. Tight editing is key.

Home page



Interior page



Header

Two dark bands—one green, one tan—form a simple, substantial header that leads the site; logo and links are reversed in white. To soften the look, a faint gradient yields an understated illusion of radiant light.

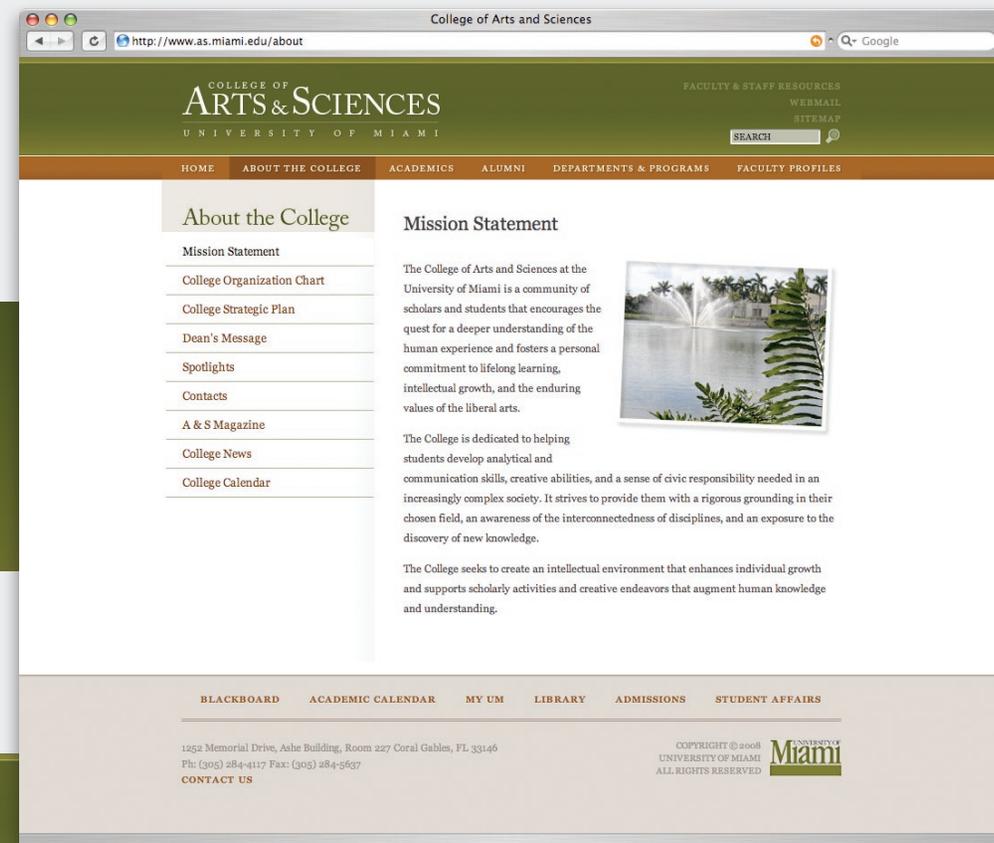
Beautiful typography is the signature element of the site. Scholarly Caslon type in classic, old-style caps and small caps (big circle, below) conveys literacy and tradition; compact line spacing (small circle) keeps minor information from floating away. The two lines of small type are the same size but spaced differently; the more-important words are in panorama.



COLLEGE OF
ARTS & SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

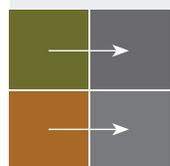
P-a-n-o-r-a-m-i-c letterspacing conveys elegance and stature. Note the tiny shadow. It's unusual to see such a modern artifact juxtaposed with old type, but its understatement is classy and in this case adds valuable depth.

Right, four permanent links on the far right are tinted to appear barely there, yet remain easily accessible.



Main links

The highest-level links are in the tan header band. Typography, color and shadow are identical to the logo, which reinforces their connection and permanence.



Left, tan band and green field are different colors but have virtually the same *gray value* (dark-light), which keeps the two connected while being different. Below, wide letterspacing is relaxed and less demanding than normal spacing and so conveys a sense of deliberation and stateliness. Onscreen, it's easier to read, too.

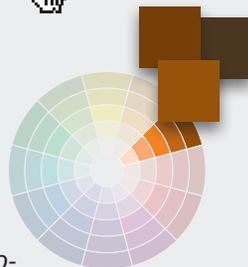
ALUMNI ALUMNI ALUMNI



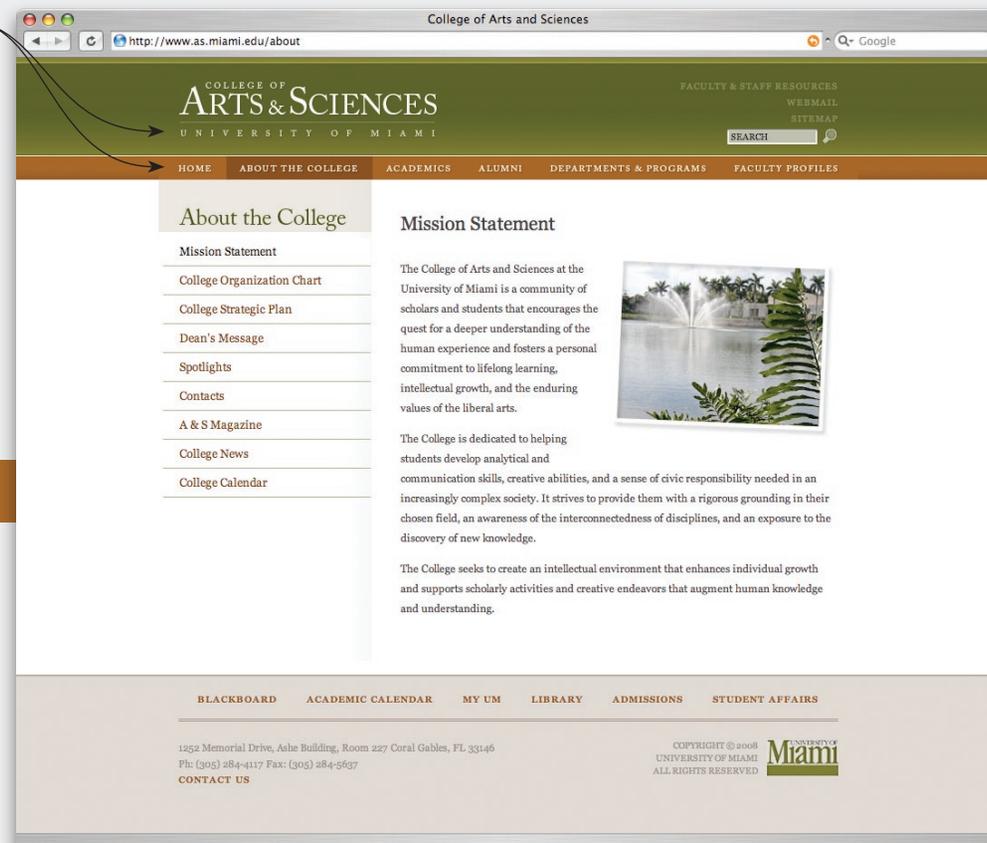
HOME ABOUT THE COLLEGE ACADEMICS ALUMNI

Link Active Hover

Three shades of tan define the link states *normal*, *active* and *hover*; this quietly but very clearly tells the reader where he is. Shades are progressively darker versions of one color—a *monochromatic* palette, right—that change the message without changing the subject. Nice.



Link type matches the logo.



Sub links

As the reader moves deeper into the site, subtle changes of type *case* and *color* are all it takes to signal the different levels. Style and size remain constant.

ACADEMICS

Dean's Message

Reverse the colors The beautifully uniform look of the site results from as few typographic differences as possible. Left, the sub links retain the type *size* and *style* of the main links but just change case and reverse color.

Dean's Message

Spotlights

❖ A Chemical Change

❖ Designs by Michiko

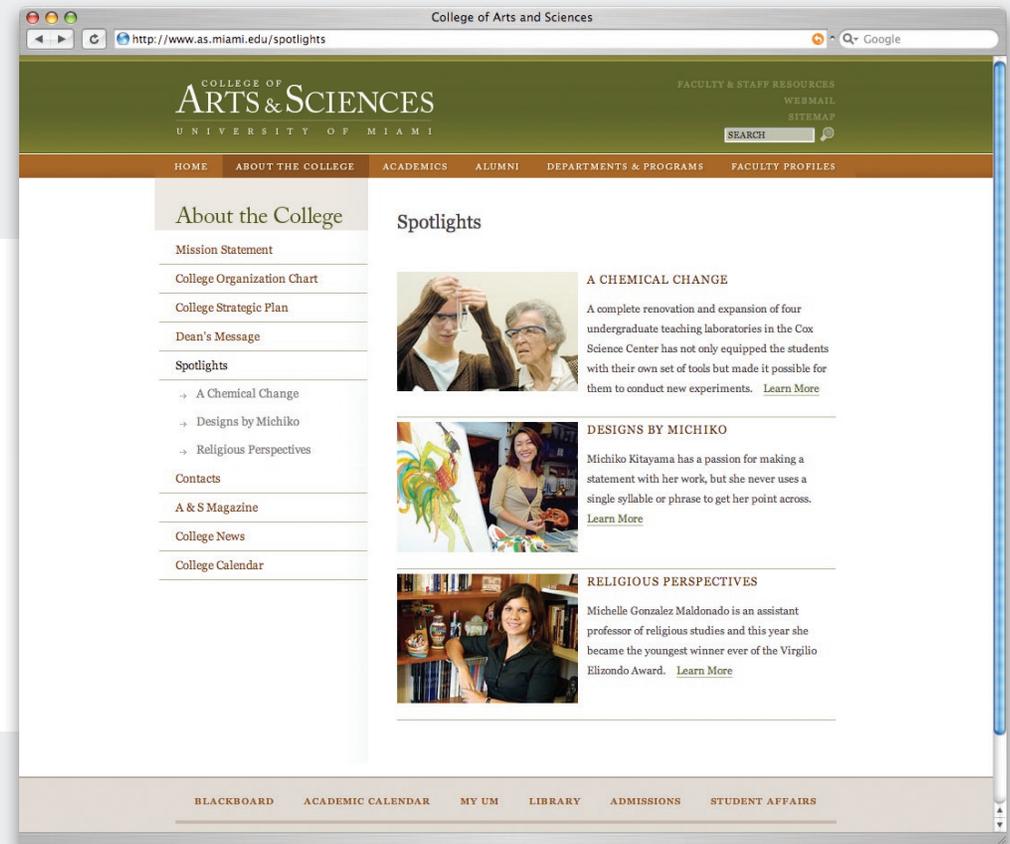
❖ Religious Perspectives

Contacts

A & S Magazine

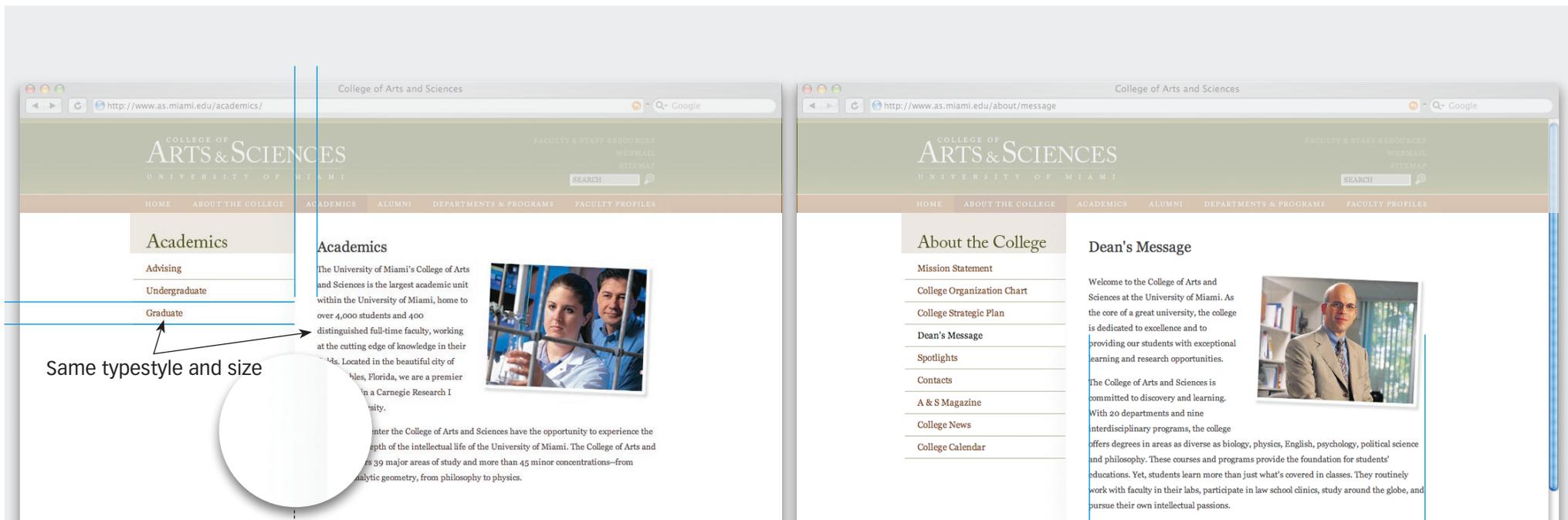
75%

As the links descend, the type color changes to black, then to gray. Note one typeface in one size easily conveys four levels of information.



Main stage

Between header and footer, a white “main stage” is the focal point of the site. On each page, one short, book-like article is set in widely spaced lines of serif type, which conveys an airy, literary look that’s very pleasant to read.



Same typestyle and size

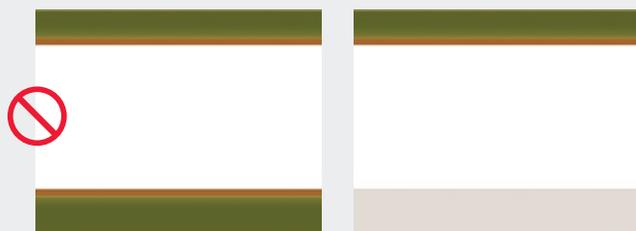
A gradient as light as chiffon The left column is defined by an incredibly subtle gradient that fades from less than two percent color to white. What’s interesting is how slight the edge has to be, not merely to be visible but *clearly present*. Beautiful.



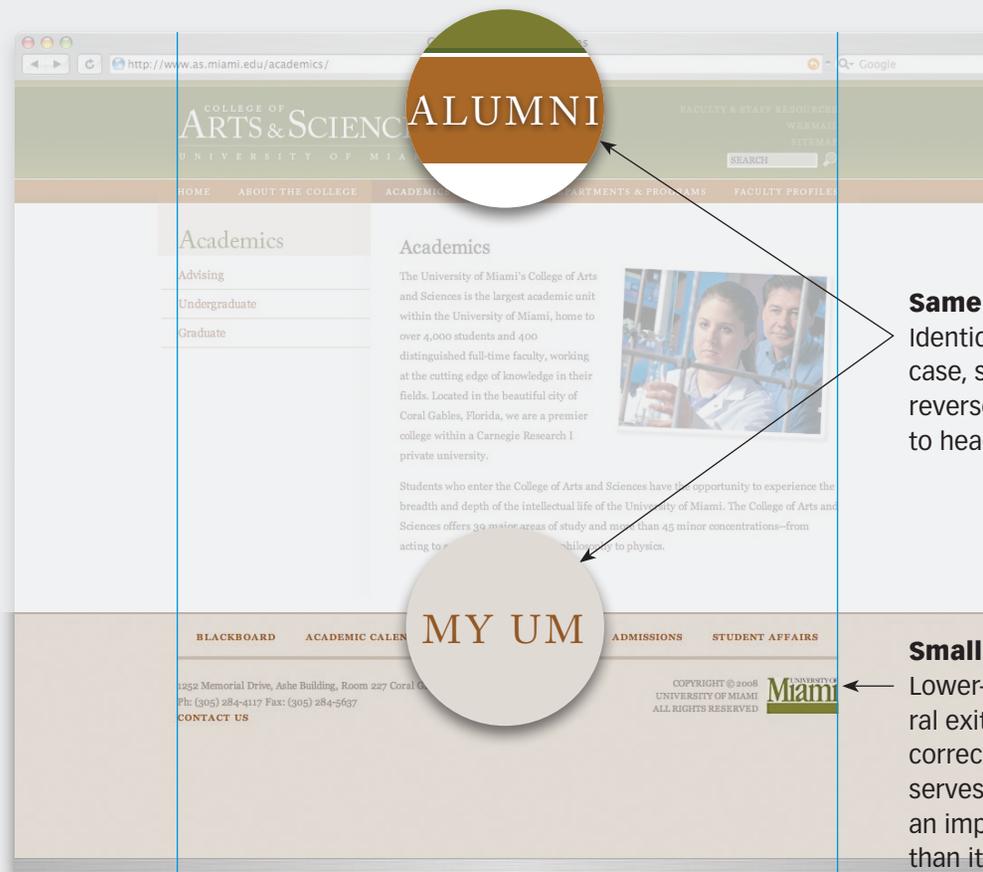
Comfortable reading width Book-width columns of type—45 to 65 characters or so—are ideal for comfortable reading; the wide *leading* (spacing) is visual silence between lines that relaxes the message. The longer your lines, the more space you should put between them.

Footer

A correctly designed footer conveys real authority; it should be thought of not as the tail but the foundation that supports everything else. The footer holds permanent information—key links, contact information, logo.



Hierarchy is important Above, left, a header and footer of equal weight result in an “Oreo cookie” that divides the reader’s attention and weakens the presentation. Instead, three-stage hierarchy gives each section appropriate weight. Keep in mind that the reader’s eye will always gravitate toward the center. Save it for your most important material, and put supporting material around it.



Same size, different color Identical typography—style, case, size and spacing—but reversed colors connect footer to header and unify the page.

Small logo, big impression Lower-right corner is the natural exit point of a page and the correct place for a logo, which serves as a full stop and makes an impression much bigger than its small size. Efficient.

Background colors extend outward. ← ← Live matter is aligned flush. → →

Type

The html text of the entire site is set in Georgia, the best onscreen serif typeface universally available. Georgia has the look of book typography plus the *medium* physical traits that make it especially readable at low resolution . . .

Compared to Times, the universal default . . .

Georgia is bigger The perceived size of a typeface is not its point size but its x-height, that is, the size of its lowercase characters; Georgia's are 68% of the cap height, quite average. Times is too small for onscreen clarity.

Georgia has text figures Georgia's old-style numerals, or text figures, have ascenders and descenders like lowercase letters. These are more distinctive and therefore easier to read than ordinary, "all-caps" numerals. Beautiful, too.

1b3c6d7

Georgia Times

Wider counters The open shapes inside the characters, called *counters*, are as important as the outside. Georgia has big, round counters that remain open at low res.

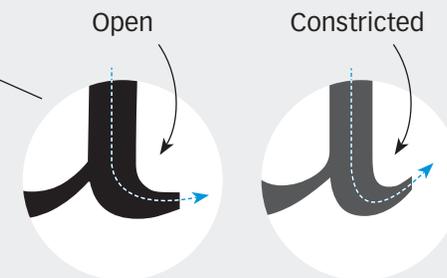


Georgia



Times

Bolder serifs Georgia's serifs are bold and easy to see, and its curves are simple and open. Times' thin, pointy serifs are handsome in print but weak onscreen, where too-few pixels are available to render them clearly.



Type

Word- and letter spacing is as important as letter shapes, and here Georgia also excels. At text sizes it is smooth, repetitive and rhythmic.

Georgia

Academics

The University of Miami's College of Arts and Sciences is the largest academic unit within the University of Miami, home to over 4,000 students and 400 distinguished full-time faculty, working at the cutting edge of knowledge in their fields. Located in the beautiful city of Coral Gables, Florida, we are a premier college within a Carnegie Research I private university.

Students who enter the College of Arts and Sciences have the opportunity to experience the breadth and depth of the intellectual life of the University of Miami. The College of Arts and Sciences offers 39 major areas of study and more than 45 minor concentrations -- from acting to analytic geometry, from philosophy to physics.

Times

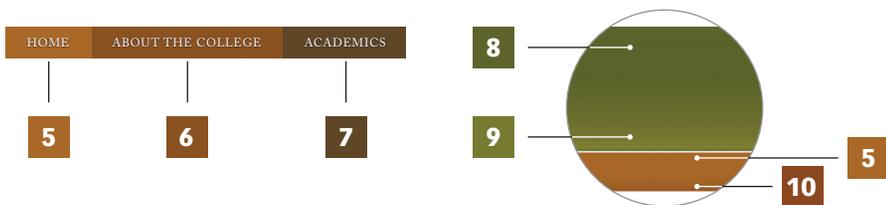
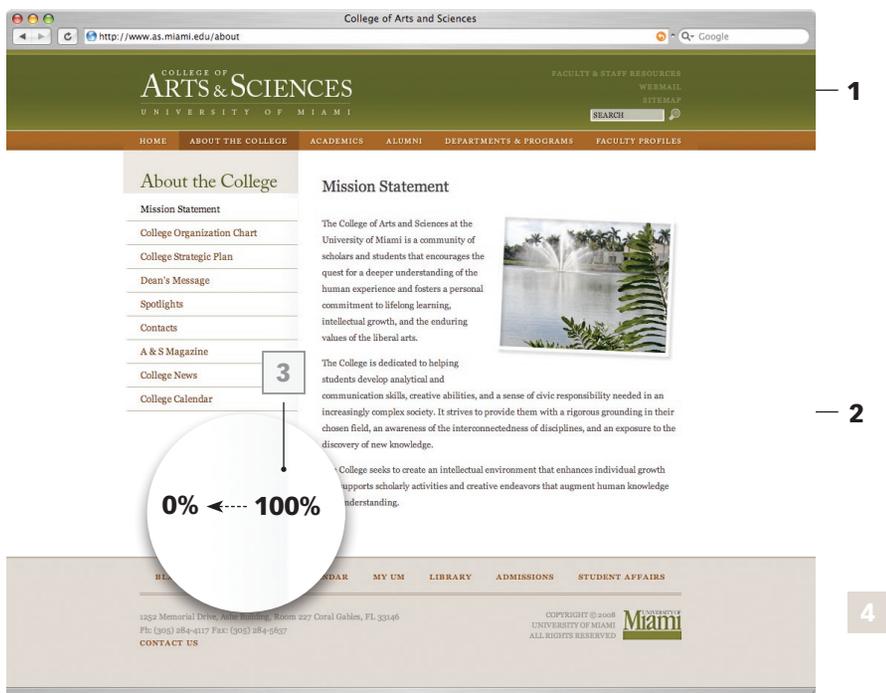
Academics

The University of Miami's College of Arts and Sciences is the largest academic unit within the University of Miami, home to over 4,000 students and 400 distinguished full-time faculty, working at the cutting edge of knowledge in their fields. Located in the beautiful city of Coral Gables, Florida, we are a premier college within a Carnegie Research I private university.

Students who enter the College of Arts and Sciences have the opportunity to experience the breadth and depth of the intellectual life of the University of Miami. The College of Arts and Sciences offers 39 major areas of study and more than 45 minor concentrations -- from acting to analytic geometry, from philosophy to physics.

Georgia reads better online Unlike Times, which is a print typeface adapted for the screen, Georgia was designed specifically for onscreen use. As a result, its letter- and word spacing at low resolution is smooth, repetitive and rhythmic, while Times' is often choppy and fitful, an effect not visible in print (above). Even in print, however, Times' thinner stems and serifs yield an edgier, less coherent look.

Article resources



Typefaces

- 1 [Adobe Caslon Bold QsF](http://www.adobe.com) (www.adobe.com)
- 2 [Georgia](http://www.fonts.com) (www.fonts.com)

Design

- [Jody Ferry](http://www.jodyferry.com) (www.jodyferry.com)
[WebLinc, LLC](http://www.weblinc.com) (www.weblinc.com)

Colors

- 3 R245 G245 B245
- 4 R215 G209 B202
- 5 R151 G83 B10
- 6 R118 G63 B6
- 7 R75 G55 B31
- 8 R75 G82 B26
- 9 R103 G107 B30
- 10 R140 G70 B6



Subscribe to Before & After

Subscribe to Before & After, and become a more capable, confident designer for pennies per article. To learn more, go to

<http://www.bamagazine.com/Subscribe>

E-mail this article

To pass along a free copy of this article to others, [click here](#).

Join our e-list

To be notified by e-mail of new articles as they become available, go to

<http://www.bamagazine.com/email>

Before & After magazine

Before & After has been sharing its practical approach to graphic design since 1990. Because our modern world has made designers of us all (ready or not), Before & After is dedicated to making graphic design understandable, useful and even fun for everyone.

John McWade Publisher and creative director

Gaye McWade Associate publisher

Dexter Mark Abellera Staff designer

Before & After magazine

323 Lincoln Street, Roseville, CA 95678

Telephone 916-784-3880

Fax 916-784-3995

E-mail mailbox@bamagazine.com

www <http://www.bamagazine.com>

Copyright ©2008 Before & After magazine

ISSN 1049-0035. All rights reserved

You may pass along a free copy of this article to others by clicking [here](#). You may not alter this article, and you may not charge for it. You may quote brief sections for review; please credit Before & After magazine, and [let us know](#). To link Before & After magazine to your Web site, use this URL: <http://www.bamagazine.com>. For all other permissions, [please contact us](#).

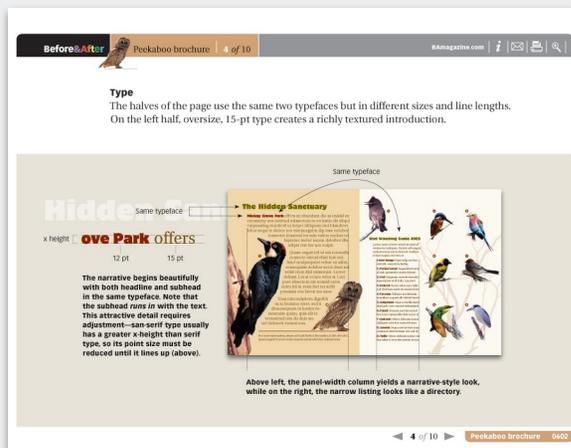
Before & After is made to fit your binder

Before & After articles are intended for permanent reference. All are titled and numbered.

For the current table of contents, [click here](#). To save time and paper, a paper-saver format of this article, suitable for one- or two-sided printing, is provided on the following pages.

For presentation format

[Print: \(Specify pages 1–12\)](#)



Print

Format: Landscape
Page Size: Fit to Page

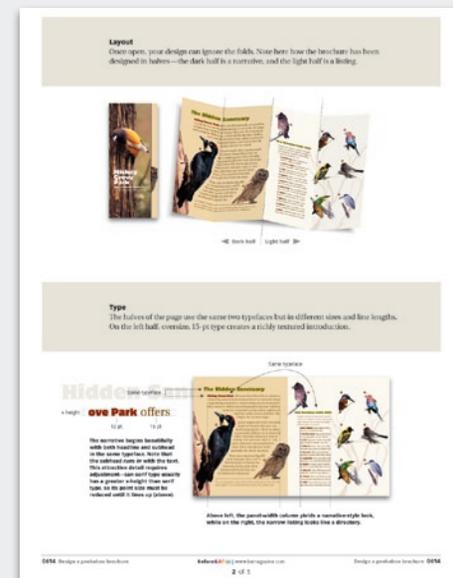


Save

Presentation format or
Paper-saver format

For paper-saver format

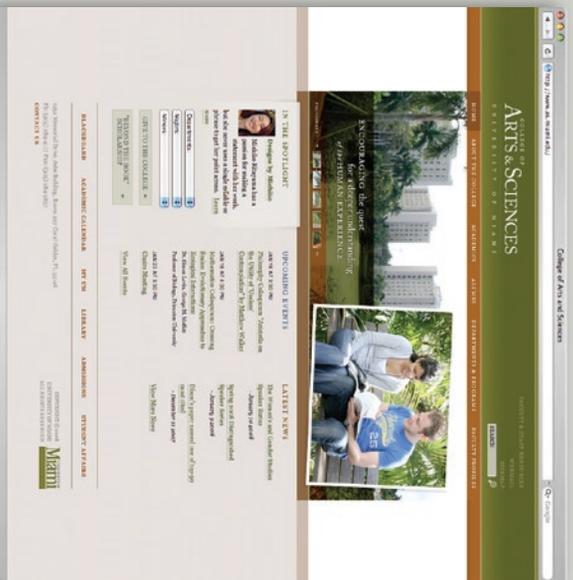
[Print: \(Specify pages 14–19\)](#)



Lessons from a

beautiful site

The University of Miami
College of Arts & Sciences
shows that beauty really
is in the details.

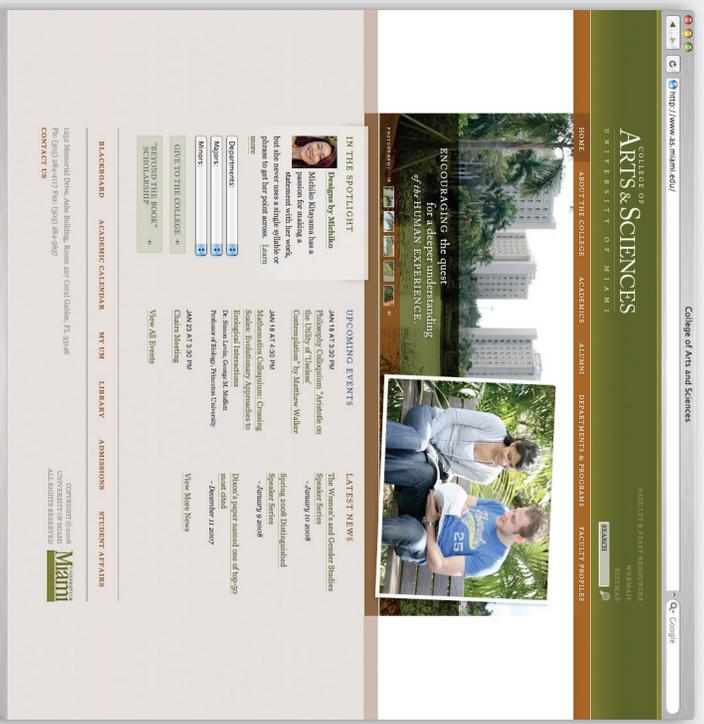


The best design is simple design: an idea, an image, a few words, open space. It's clear, attractive, memorable.

But real life is not often simple; it's full of *stuff*. People, programs and commerce all need attention and screen space, and this can make for a busy, complex site.

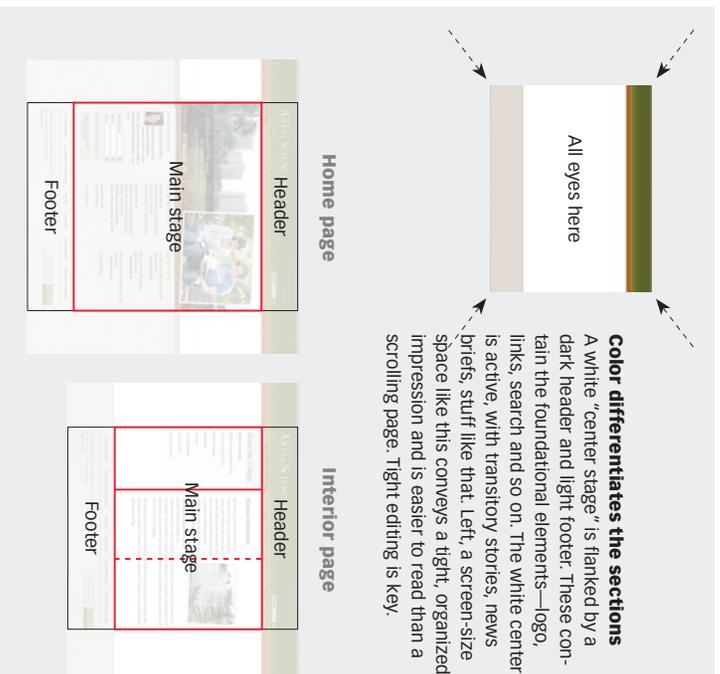
What we like about the University of Miami's College of Arts & Sciences site is that it handles complexity beautifully. It does this in two ways: It reduces each element to its essence (the simple thing), then it beautifully crafts the details. A dozen visual techniques allow its many parts to coexist effortlessly. Let's look at a few.

Home page Two dozen elements and links easily coexist on this inviting, visually coherent page.



Structure

The site is conveniently screen size, not too long, so most of it is always visible. It is organized in three horizontal sections; each holds a different kind of information—permanent stuff top and bottom, active stuff in the middle.



Header

Two dark bands—one tan, one fan—form a simple, substantial header that leads the site; logo and links are reversed in white. To soften the look, a faint gradient yields an understated illusion of radiant light.

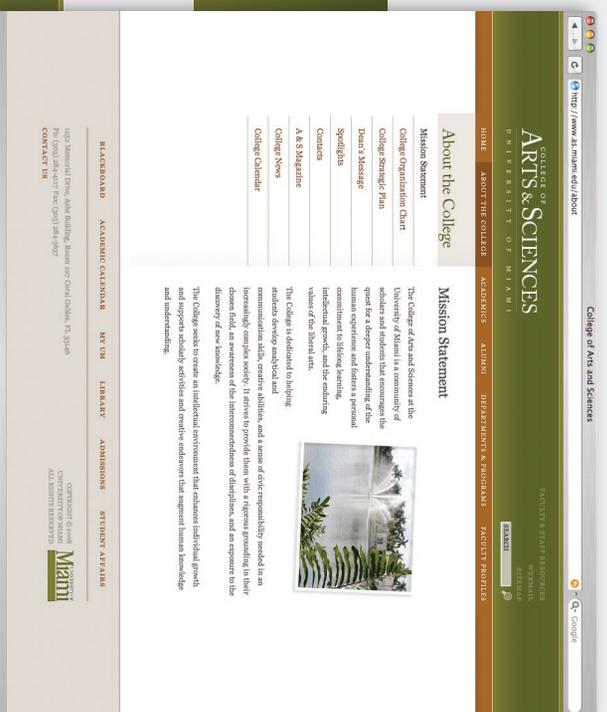
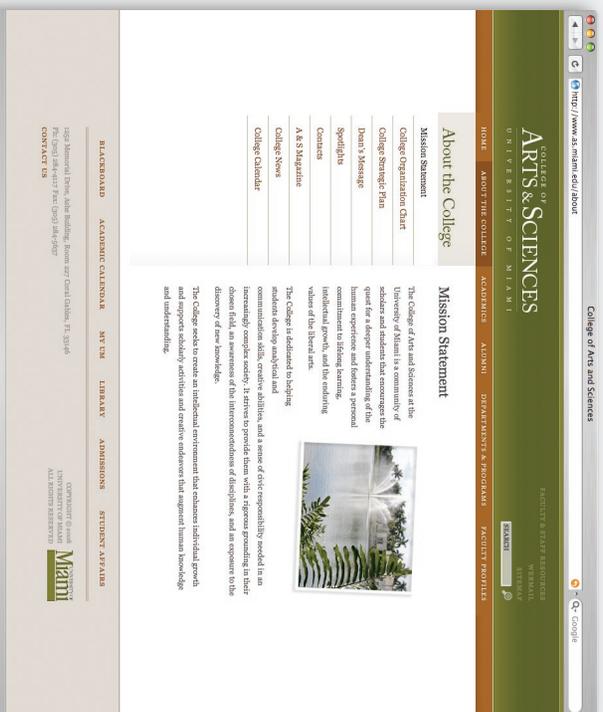
Beautiful typography is the signature element of the site. Scholarly Caslon type in classic, old-style caps and small caps

(big circle, below) conveys literacy and tradition; compact line spacing (small circle) keeps minor information from floating away. The two lines of small type are the same size but spaced differently; the more-important words are in panorama.



Par-o-r-am-ic letterspacing conveys elegance and stature. Note the tiny shadow. It’s unusual to see such a modern artifact juxtaposed with old type, but its understatement is classy and in this case adds valuable depth.

Right, four permanent links on the far right are tinted to appear barely there, yet remain easily accessible.

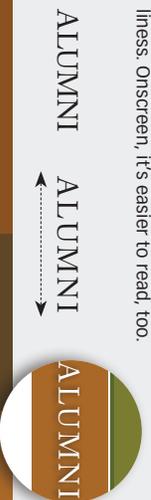


Main links

The highest-level links are in the tan header band. Typography, color and shadow are identical to the logo, which reinforces their connection and permanence.



Left, **tan band** and green field are different colors but have virtually the same *gray value* (dark-light), which keeps the two connected while being different. Below, wide letterspacing is relaxed and less demanding than normal spacing and so conveys a sense of deliberation and stillness. Onscreen, it's easier to read, too.



HOME ABOUT THE COLLEGE ACADEMICS ALUMNI

Link

Active

Hover



Three shades of tan define the link states *normal*, *active* and *hover*, this quietly but very clearly tells the reader where he is. Shades are progressively darker versions of one color—a *monochromatic palette*, right—that change the message without changing the subject. Nice.

Sub links

As the reader moves deeper into the site, subtle changes of type *case* and *color* are all it takes to signal the different levels. Style and size remain constant.

ACADEMICS

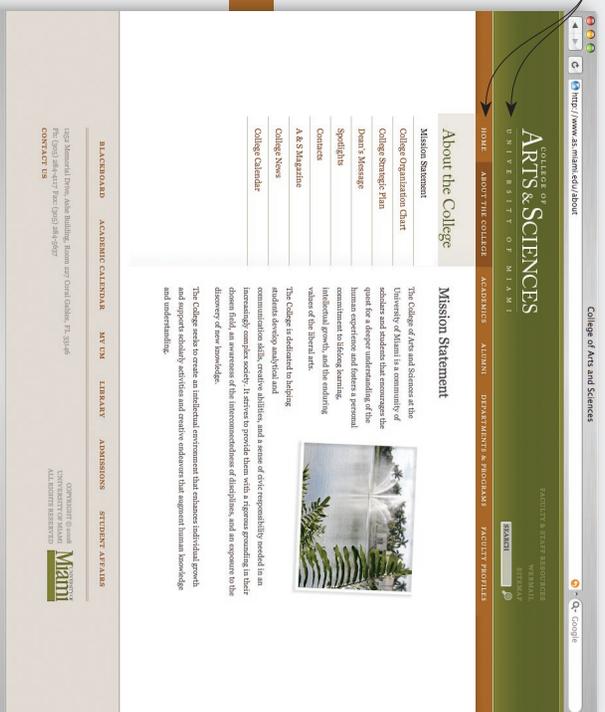
Dean's Message

Reverse the colors The beautifully uniform look of the site results from as few typographic differences as possible. Left, the sub links retain the type size and style of the main links but just change case and reverse color.

- Dean's Message
- Spotlights
 - A Chemical Change
 - Designs by Michiko
 - Religious Perspectives
- Contacts
- A & S Magazine

75%

As the links **descend**, the type color changes to black, then to gray. Note one typeface in one size easily conveys four levels of information.



Main stage

Between header and footer, a white “main stage” is the focal point of the site. On each page, one short, book-like article is set in widely spaced lines of serif type, which conveys an airy, literary look that’s very pleasant to read.



A gradient as light as chiffon The left column is defined by an incredibly subtle gradient that fades from less than two percent color to white. What’s interesting is how slight the edge has to be, not merely to be visible but *clearly present*. Beautiful.



Comfortable reading width Book-width columns of type—45 to 65 characters or so—are ideal for comfortable reading; the wide *leading* (spacing) is visual silence between lines that relaxes the message. The longer your lines, the more space you should put between them.

Footer

A correctly designed footer conveys real authority; it should be thought of not as the tail but the foundation that supports everything else. The footer holds permanent information—key links, contact information, logo.



Hierarchy is important Above, left, a header and footer of equal weight result in an “Oreo cookie” that divides the reader’s attention and weakens the presentation. Instead, three-stage hierarchy gives each section appropriate weight. Keep in mind that the reader’s eye will always gravitate toward the center. Save it for your most important material, and put supporting material around it.

Background colors extend outward.



Same size, different color Identical typography—style, case, size and spacing—but reversed colors connect footer to header and unify the page.

Small logo, big impression Lower-right corner is the natural exit point of a page and the correct place for a logo, which serves as a full stop and makes an impression much bigger than its small size. Efficient.

Live matter is aligned flush.

Type

The html text of the entire site is set in Georgia, the best onscreen serif typeface universally available. Georgia has the look of book typography plus the *medium* physical traits that make it especially readable at low resolution . . .

Compared to Times, the universal default . . .

Georgia is bigger The perceived size of a typeface is not its point size but its x-height, that is, the size of its lowercase characters; Georgia's are 68% of the cap height, quite average. Times is too small for onscreen clarity.

Georgia has text figures Georgia's old-style numerals, or text figures, have ascenders and descenders like lowercase letters. These are more distinctive and therefore easier to read than ordinary, "all-caps" numerals. Beautiful, too.

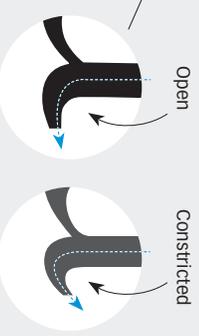
1̣p̣3̣c̣6̣ḍ7̣

Georgia Times

Wider counters The open shapes inside the characters, called *counters*, are as important as the outside. Georgia has big, round counters that remain open at low res.



Bolder serifs Georgia's serifs are bold and easy to see, and its curves are simple and open. Times' thin, pointy serifs are handsome in print but weak onscreen, where too-few pixels are available to render them clearly.



Type

Word- and letter spacing is as important as letter shapes, and here Georgia also excels. At text sizes it is smooth, repetitive and rhythmic.

Georgia

Academics

The University of Miami's College of Arts and Sciences is the largest academic unit within the University of Miami, home to over 4,000 students and 400 distinguished full-time faculty, working at the cutting edge of knowledge in their fields. Located in the beautiful city of Coral Gables, Florida, we are a premier college within a Carnegie Research I private university.

Students who enter the College of Arts and Sciences have the opportunity to experience the breadth and depth of the intellectual life of the University of Miami. The College of Arts and Sciences offers 39 major areas of study and more than 45 minor concentrations -- from acting to analytic geometry, from philosophy to physics.

Times

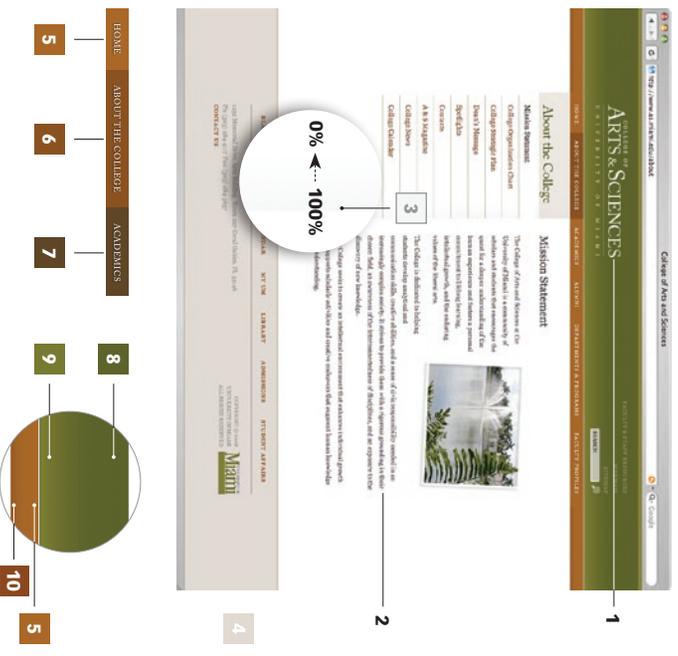
Academics

The University of Miami's College of Arts and Sciences is the largest academic unit within the University of Miami, home to over 4,000 students and 400 distinguished full-time faculty, working at the cutting edge of knowledge in their fields. Located in the beautiful city of Coral Gables, Florida, we are a premier college within a Carnegie Research I private university.

Students who enter the College of Arts and Sciences have the opportunity to experience the breadth and depth of the intellectual life of the University of Miami. The College of Arts and Sciences offers 39 major areas of study and more than 45 minor concentrations -- from acting to analytic geometry, from philosophy to physics.

Georgia reads better online Unlike Times, which is a print typeface adapted for the screen, Georgia was designed specifically for onscreen use. As a result, its letter- and word spacing at low resolution is smooth, repetitive and rhythmic. While Times' is often choppy and fitful, an effect not visible in print (above). Even in print, however, Times' thinner stems and serifs yield an edgier, less coherent look.

Article resources



Typefaces

- 1 **Adobe Caslon Bold OSF** (www.adobe.com)
- 2 **Georgia** (www.fonts.com)

Design

- Jody Ferry** (www.jodyferry.com)
WebInc, LLC (www.webinc.com)

Colors

- | | |
|----|----------------|
| 3 | R245 G245 B245 |
| 4 | R215 G209 B202 |
| 5 | R151 G83 B10 |
| 6 | R118 G63 B6 |
| 7 | R75 G55 B31 |
| 8 | R75 G82 B26 |
| 9 | R103 G107 B30 |
| 10 | R140 G70 B6 |

Subscribe to Before & After

Subscribe to Before & After and become a more capable, confident designer for pennies per article. To learn more, go to <http://www.bannagazine.com/Subscribe>

E-mail this article

To pass along a free copy of this article to others, [click here](#).

Join our e-list

To be notified by e-mail of new articles as they become available, go to <http://www.bannagazine.com/email>

Before & After magazine

Before & After has been sharing its practical approach to graphic design since 1990. Because our modern world has made designers of us all (ready or not), Before & After is dedicated to making graphic design understandable, useful and even fun for everyone.

John McWade Publisher and creative director

Gaye McWade Associate publisher
Dexter Mark Abellera Staff designer

Before & After magazine

323 Lincoln Street, Roseville, CA 95678
Telephone 916-784-3880
Fax 916-784-3995
E-mail mailbox@bannagazine.com
www <http://www.bannagazine.com>

Copyright ©2008 Before & After magazine
ISSN 1049-0035. All rights reserved

You may pass along a free copy of this article to others by clicking [here](#). You may not alter this article, and you may not charge for it. You may quote brief sections for review; please credit Before & After magazine, and [let us know](#). To link Before & After magazine to your Web site, use this URL: <http://www.bannagazine.com>. For all other permissions, [please contact us](#).