



## CLAIRE JOSEPH: RECOMMENDED COLLEGE AND ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM LIST

### COLLEGE-SELECTION CRITERIA

Claire's strongest stated priorities are:

- A five-year professional Bachelor of Architecture degree
- A program that allows her to begin working without first completing a separate master's degree
- Strong job placement and preparation for professional practice
- A healthy, supportive studio culture
- Internships, client projects, design-build work, or other real-world experiences
- Exposure to CAD, digital modeling, fabrication, 3D printing, and emerging design technology
- A large or active university with plenty of people, activities, campus life, and places to go
- A welcoming environment that is not dominated by wealth, prestige, or social status
- An active Christian community, preferably including RUF
- A location within driving distance of Decatur, ideally in the South or Southeast
- Scholarship potential and manageable total costs
- A program that balances creativity with structure and practical instruction rather than focusing primarily on abstract design theory

Claire currently ranks Auburn first and Mississippi State second. She identifies Auburn as her best cultural fit because of its atmosphere, size, architecture reputation, study spaces, and safety features.

A NAAB-accredited Bachelor of Architecture is normally a five-year professional undergraduate degree. It differs from a four-year preprofessional architecture degree that typically requires additional study before the student has completed the educational requirement for architectural licensure.

### RECOMMENDED CORE COLLEGE LIST

#### 1. AUBURN UNIVERSITY

**Overall fit:** Strongest current fit

**Recommended position:** Top choice, but not a guaranteed architecture outcome

**Why Auburn fits Claire:**

- Auburn offers a five-year accredited professional Bachelor of Architecture.
- It provides the large-university atmosphere, school spirit, active campus, Southern location, and traditional college experience Claire prefers.
- Claire has already attended Auburn architecture camp and has a personal basis for evaluating the program.
- Auburn aligns with her interest in making, modeling, residential design, collaboration, and a structured studio education.
- RUF is available at Auburn.
- Auburn has the strongest emotional and cultural connection for Claire based on her questionnaire.

**Important concern:** Admission to Auburn University does not automatically guarantee uninterrupted advancement through the entire professional studio sequence. Students begin in Pre-Architecture, and progression into the professional second-year studio is competitive. Auburn provides Foundation Unit and Summer Design pathways, but Claire and her family need to understand what happens if she is not selected for the second-year sequence.

**Questions Claire should ask Auburn:**

- How many first-year Pre-Architecture students begin each year?
- How many earn a place in the second-year professional studio?
- What factors are used in the progression decision?
- What percentage of students complete the B.Arch within five years?
- How many students use the Summer Design option?
- What majors do students select if they do not progress?
- How much should a family budget annually for studio supplies, software, printing, models, travel, and technology?

**Admissions and scholarship planning:**

For Fall 2027, Auburn's final Early Action deadline is December 1, 2026. The complete admission file must be submitted by that date for scholarship consideration. The test-score receipt deadline for scholarship consideration is January 12, 2027, and the financial-aid and scholarship priority deadline is February 16, 2027.

## **2. MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Overall fit:** Excellent alternative and essential application

**Recommended position:** Second choice and one of the most important schools on the list

**Why Mississippi State fits Claire:**

- Mississippi State offers a five-year, NAAB-accredited professional Bachelor of Architecture.
- The program emphasizes hands-on, project-based studio learning, technology, history, design, and professional practice.
- It has a large Southern university environment with SEC athletics and traditional campus life.
- RUF has been active at Mississippi State for more than 50 years.
- The school reports that merit scholarships for architecture students are structured around the expected five-year course of study.
- Mississippi State may provide a more favorable financial possibility than some of Claire's other choices.

**Important concern:** Admission to Mississippi State and admission to its School of Architecture are separate decisions. The architecture application includes a 500- to 800-word essay, a one-page resume, two required observational drawings, six to twelve creative pieces, GPA information, and test scores. These six areas are scored equally. The final year of Mississippi State's five-year architecture program is completed at its Jackson Center rather than on the main Starkville campus. Claire needs to decide whether she would be comfortable relocating to Jackson for that portion of the program.

**Admissions and scholarship planning:**

The Mississippi State application opens August 1. The separate architecture application opens October 15, and the early architecture acceptance deadline is December 1. For students beginning in Fall 2027, Mississippi State's General Scholarship Application opens October 1, 2026. The scholarship system includes automatic academic awards and separate competitive, departmental, private, leadership, and service opportunities.

## **3. UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE**

**Overall fit:** Strong campus, professional, and faith-community fit

**Recommended position:** High-priority application

**Why Tennessee fits Claire:**

- Tennessee offers a five-year professionally accredited Bachelor of Architecture.
- The university provides the active, large-campus atmosphere Claire wants.
- The architecture program emphasizes studio education, design fundamentals, making, industry partnerships, internships, professional exposure, and emerging design practices.
- The college describes itself as offering a smaller-college educational environment within a large university.
- RUF at Tennessee offers large group, freshman fellowship, and small-group opportunities.

**Important concern:** Tennessee's architecture curriculum includes conceptual, abstract, experimental, and open-ended design exercises. Claire has said she does not want a program dominated by philosophical or abstract ideas. This does not automatically make Tennessee a poor fit, but she should visit a studio, review first- and second-year student projects, and ask how the program balances experimentation with practical design and professional skills.

**Admissions planning:** Architecture applicants should select the Bachelor of Architecture as their first-choice major. Tennessee strongly encourages first-year applicants to submit by the November 1 Early Action deadline. Early Action files must be completed by November 15. The regular application deadline is December 15, with completion by January 15.

## 5. UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

**Overall fit:** Strong architecture, technology, and campus-life option

**Recommended position:** Add as a distance-stretch school

**Why Arkansas fits Claire:**

- The Fay Jones School offers a five-year Bachelor of Architecture curriculum.
- The program includes design studios and professional-practice preparation, with opportunities connected to fabrication, design-build work, community design, and other specialized studio experiences.
- The university offers the active campus environment and Southern culture Claire prefers.
- RUF is active at the University of Arkansas.
- Several university scholarships are renewable for five years for architecture students, which is important because four-year scholarship limits can create a funding gap for B.Arch students.

**Important concern:** Arkansas is farther from Decatur than Claire's preferred radius. It should remain on the list only if she feels that the architecture opportunities, campus, and financial package justify the additional distance.

**Scholarship planning:** The priority deadline for entering-freshman scholarship consideration is November 15, with a later final scholarship deadline. Nonresident awards and other competitive scholarships may be renewable for the fifth architecture year when renewal requirements are met.

## RECOMMENDED REACH SCHOOLS

### 6. VIRGINIA TECH

**Overall fit:** Strong academic and architecture fit, but outside the preferred distance

**Recommended position:** Reach school

**Why Virginia Tech may be worth considering:**

- Virginia Tech offers a five-year professional Bachelor of Architecture.

- It provides a large university, strong campus identity, extensive facilities, design laboratories, fabrication opportunities, and a highly developed architecture environment.
- A first-year portfolio is not currently required for admission to the architecture program. Students build a professional portfolio during the program.

**Why it may not fit:**

- It is significantly farther from home than Claire prefers.
- It would require Claire to accept a different distance and travel pattern.
- Admission should be treated as competitive even with Claire's strong academic record.

She should investigate whether the culture feels welcoming and grounded rather than overly competitive or reputation-driven.

## 7. CORNELL UNIVERSITY

**Overall fit:** Academic reach and major cultural-distance stretch

**Recommended position:** Apply only if Claire develops an authentic personal interest in Cornell

**Why Cornell may be considered:**

- Cornell offers a five-year, NAAB-accredited professional Bachelor of Architecture.
- The program combines intensive design education with theory, history, technology, representation, and structures.
- It offers extraordinary architecture resources and professional connections.

**Why it may not fit:**

- Cornell is far beyond Claire's preferred distance.
- Its climate, setting, intensity, culture, and architecture philosophy would be substantially different from Auburn.
- Its application requires a portfolio and video interview in addition to the university application.

Claire should not apply solely because Cornell is prestigious. The application effort is justified only if she reviews the curriculum and student work and genuinely believes she would choose Cornell over her closer options.

## CONDITIONAL SCHOOL

## 8. NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

**Overall fit:** Strong design university, but the degree pathway does not cleanly match Claire's stated requirement

**Recommended position:** Keep only if Claire becomes comfortable with its structure

North Carolina State admits first-year architecture students to the four-year Bachelor of Environmental Design in Architecture. The professional B.Arch is a separate one-year program completed after the preprofessional degree. Admission from high school also requires a design portfolio.

Although the combined route can be completed in five years, it is not the same as entering one continuous five-year B.Arch curriculum. Because Claire has expressed concern about additional admissions hurdles and wants the fastest, clearest route to a professional degree, NC State should remain conditional rather than central to the list.

## RECOMMENDED FINAL APPLICATION STRUCTURE

### ***Core applications:***

- Auburn University
- Mississippi State University
- University of Tennessee, Knoxville
- University of Arkansas

### ***Reach applications:***

- Virginia Tech
- Cornell University, but only if Claire develops a genuine interest after further research

### ***Conditional application:***

- North Carolina State University

## PLANNING ESTIMATES FOR ADMISSIONS CATEGORIES

These are strategic planning estimates, not admission predictions:

**Auburn:** Strong university candidate; architecture progression remains competitive

**Mississippi State:** Strong university candidate; competitive separate architecture admission

**Tennessee:** Competitive target or reach for architecture

**Arkansas:** Target or competitive target, with distance and cost requiring review

**Virginia Tech:** Reach

**Cornell:** High reach

**NC State:** Reach for studio-based design admission and conditional because of the degree structure

Claire's 4.0 unweighted GPA, 4.3 weighted GPA, 34 ACT, Engineering Academy participation, design interests, service, leadership, and technical experience make her academically competitive. Architecture admission, however, often depends on portfolios, essays, drawings, studio capacity, or later progression reviews—not academics alone.