



A2 ACHIEVE STUDENT GAP ANALYSIS

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Where You Stand Right Now

The first thing I notice about you is that your application is stronger and more interesting than it may look if we simply list your GPA, ACT score, clubs and activities.

On paper, you are a solid student with a 3.8 GPA, a 29 ACT/30 superscore, advanced coursework, several long-term activities, approximately 150 hours of service, work experience and National Honor Society. You have participated in dance, show choir, performing arts, soccer, youth group, FCCLA and SADD, and you have worked with customers, children and families.

But what matters more strategically is what begins to show up when I look across everything you told me.

You are very people-oriented. People come to you for advice. You pay attention to why people behave the way they do. You notice the person in the room who seems uncomfortable or upset. You mediate disagreements. You like leading groups. You have encouraged younger dancers, teammates and other performers. You are interested in mental health, relationships, history and other people's experiences.

That is important because right now you are considering law, business, marketing and therapy, and at first glance those can look like four unrelated directions. I don't think they are unrelated at all. There is a pretty clear common thread running through them: **people, communication, influence, leadership, problem-solving and understanding how people think.**

So your biggest issue is not that you have "no direction." You actually have a direction. We simply need to narrow the career and major options inside that direction.

What Is Already Working in Your Favor

Your academic profile is solid.

You report a 3.8 GPA and a 29 ACT with a 30 superscore. You have also challenged yourself with AP Literature, AP Language, AP U.S. History and AP Government and report dual-enrollment coursework through UNA and Northwest Shoals, including Algebra II and Precalculus.

Your course choices also tell us something about you. Your advanced coursework leans heavily toward English, writing, government and history, and you independently identify English as your favorite subject and math as your least favorite.

That is a useful pattern, particularly as we evaluate law, business, marketing, communications, psychology and other people-centered majors.

There is one academic information gap we need to fix: I do not yet know whether the 3.8 GPA you gave me is weighted or unweighted, what your class rank is, what your grade trend looks like, or exactly what your senior-year schedule contains. I also want to verify how Muscle Shoals lists the courses that you described as both AP and dual enrollment. Those details matter when we evaluate Auburn in particular and when we calculate scholarship competitiveness.

Your course rigor is stronger than a simple GPA tells us.

A student with a 3.8 while taking AP and college-level coursework is different from a student with the same GPA in a much lighter schedule. We need to make sure your Common App coursework and resume accurately communicate the rigor you have taken on.

Your AP/DE concentration also supports the story that you are more naturally drawn to reading, writing, ideas, history and people than to highly quantitative or laboratory-heavy work.

Your activities have real depth.

You do not have a resume full of activities you joined for one semester simply to add another line. Some of your strongest involvement has continued for years:

- Show Choir — grades 9–12
- Muscle Shoals Performing Arts — grades 9–12
- Youth Group — grades 9–12
- FCCLA — grades 9–12
- VBS — grades 9–12
- Dance Team — grades 10–11
- SADD — grades 11–12
- Soccer — grade 12

That longevity matters.

The gap is not participation. The gap is **how we describe what happened inside those activities.** Right now, much of your involvement is expressed as "I participated in..." when there are signs that you were doing more than simply attending.

You mentored younger girls at dance camp. You encouraged teammates. You led group projects in APUSH and AP Government. You helped lead a student-run show choir practice and encouraged other performers to try things they were afraid to attempt.

Those are leadership behaviors even if nobody handed you a president's title.

We should not manufacture leadership titles you did not have. We should absolutely stop hiding leadership you actually did demonstrate.

Your service has substance.

You estimate approximately 150 service hours across school, church, FCCLA, dance and community activities. What interests me most is not the number.

When you were asked which service experience mattered most, you chose the nursing home because you enjoyed listening to residents' stories and simply being someone they could talk to. That answer fits almost everything else you told me about yourself.

You notice people.
You listen.
You like hearing people's stories.
You want to understand what people are thinking and feeling.

That is much more valuable to your overall application story than trying to add another random service project.

Your work experience is useful and should not be treated like filler.

You have worked as an ice cream server, camp counselor and babysitter. Those experiences have required customer service, handling money, time management, patience, child safety, multitasking and responsibility.

For someone considering business, law, marketing, leadership or a helping profession, working directly with people is relevant experience.

Your camp-counselor work is especially interesting because it reinforces the mentoring/leadership pattern we see elsewhere.

The Biggest Gaps I See

Gap #1: Your Career Direction Needs to Be Narrowed, Not Chosen Forever

You currently list law, business, marketing and therapy as possible areas, while saying your longer-term goal may be becoming a lawyer or business owner. You also say that, if money were not a factor, you could see yourself teaching. In your picture of yourself at 35, you are some type of boss or CEO helping interns grow.

I do not want you choosing a major simply because you think you are supposed to know the answer already.

What I do want is for us to move from four broad words to two or three serious pathways.
The strongest possibilities I see right now are:

Law / advocacy / negotiation

You like argument, perspective, people, communication, history and understanding why people do what they do. You mediate disagreements naturally. Law deserves serious exploration. Remember, though, "pre-law" does not require one particular undergraduate major. You could major in political science, English, history, communication, psychology, business or another field and later attend law school.

Business / management / entrepreneurship / marketing

This is also very believable for you. Your future vision is not simply "I want a good job." You picture yourself in charge, building something and helping younger employees grow. Business management, entrepreneurship, marketing, human resources, organizational leadership and related fields all deserve a closer look.

Psychology / counseling / people development

Your repeated interest in mental health, anxiety, relationships and people's motivations is too consistent to ignore. You may discover that you love counseling or psychology—or you may discover that you like the psychology of people but prefer applying it in business, law, marketing or leadership. That is exactly why exploration matters.

We also need to define what you mean when you say "therapy." Mental health counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech-language pathology are completely different educational pathways.

Gap #2: Your ACT Is Good Enough to Help You, but It May Be Leaving Scholarship Money on the Table

Your 29 ACT and 30 superscore are respectable scores. The question now is not simply, "Can I get into college with this?"

The better question is:

Could one more point materially change what college costs?

For at least one school on your list, the answer is yes.

For Alabama's currently published 2027 in-state automatic-merit chart, a qualifying GPA plus a **single-test ACT composite of 29** earns \$9,000 per year, while a **30–36 single-test composite** qualifies for the Presidential award covering tuition. Alabama specifically states that its ACT superscore is used for admission but not for automatic merit scholarship qualification. That makes another ACT attempt one of the highest-value things you can do this fall.

You have already told me that your ACT score required tutoring, practice and perseverance. So I would not send you back into months of testing just for bragging rights. But a realistic attempt to move your **single sitting composite from 29 to 30 or higher** could have a substantial financial return.

A 31 or 32 would strengthen the picture even further at Auburn, Mississippi State and for competitive scholarship or honors opportunities.

Gap #3: We Need to Pull the Leadership Out of Your Activities

You do not currently have a resumé dominated by formal officer titles. That is not fatal. The bigger risk would be allowing an admissions reader to assume you were only a participant when your own answers tell us otherwise.

We need specific answers to questions like:

- How many younger dancers did you help at camp?
- What did mentoring actually involve?
- How often did you take responsibility during show choir rehearsals?
- What does "leading and encouraging on the soccer team" look like in real life?
- How many children were you responsible for at summer camp?
- What audiences or community events did your performing-arts groups serve?
- Did your responsibilities increase from freshman to senior year?
- Who relied on you?
- What changed because you stepped up?

Those details will make your activities substantially stronger without adding a single new club.

Gap #4: Your Honors Section Is Thin

The only formal academic honor you listed is National Honor Society, earned in 2026. You did not list athletic, extracurricular or other awards.

I am not going to tell you to chase random awards simply so we can fill five Common App honor spaces.

We should first verify that nothing has been missed: school academic recognitions, honor roll, AP recognition, performing arts recognition, dance recognitions, soccer awards, departmental awards, competition results or workplace recognition.

If there truly are no others, then we use the legitimate honor we have and move on.

Your application is going to be stronger because of depth, employment, service, rigor and personal character—not because we inflate ordinary participation into awards.

Gap #5: Your College List Needs a Financial Layer

Alabama, Auburn, Mississippi State and Ole Miss make sense together culturally and geographically. They are all large universities with strong campus identity, broad academic options and the ability to let you explore before locking yourself into one narrow career path.

But we still do not know enough about what *you* want from a college environment.

You have told me that you want to move away, experience something new, become more confident and meet fun, loyal people who push you to be better.

We still need to know:

- How far from home actually feels right?
- Do you want sorority life?
- How important are football and school spirit?
- Do you want a very large university?
- Would you consider a smaller private college if the financial package were better?
- How important is study abroad?
- How much can your family realistically spend?
- Do you need significant merit aid for a school to remain on the list?

Until we answer those questions, I can evaluate admissions fit, but I cannot honestly call any school a **financial safety**.

Academic Analysis

Your academic record generally supports the schools and majors you are considering. You have enough rigor to show that you are not avoiding challenge, and the mix of AP humanities classes plus college coursework is particularly consistent with your strengths in English, history, communication and analysis.

What I need next is your actual transcript. I want to see:

- Weighted and unweighted GPA
- Grades by semester
- Senior schedule
- School grading scale
- Class rank or decile if reported
- Whether there is an upward or downward trend.

At this point, I do **not** see an obvious academic problem that needs explaining in Additional Information. I see missing information that we need before making finer admissions judgments.

Testing Analysis

For admission alone, a 29/30 puts several schools on your current list in a realistic range. For scholarships, testing deserves more attention.

This is a perfect example of why A2 Achieve looks at admission risk and scholarship risk separately. A score can be perfectly acceptable for admission and still fall one point short of a much stronger scholarship category.

Your testing priority should therefore be strategic:

Try to produce at least a 30 single-date ACT composite, with 31–32 as an even better target if reasonably achievable.

If your practice scores indicate that you are nowhere near improving, we reevaluate. I do not want testing to consume your senior year. But because of the scholarship implications, I would give it another focused attempt.

College List Analysis

Your four-school list is reasonable, but each school serves a slightly different role.

- **University of Alabama:** currently appears to be one of your stronger admission options and potentially an important scholarship option.
- **Mississippi State:** also appears to be a strong admission option and could become especially interesting financially as an out-of-state student.
- **Ole Miss:** appears realistic academically and offers the kind of large-campus Southern college experience you seem to be considering.
- **Auburn:** is the school on this list I would treat with the most caution. It is absolutely realistic enough to apply to, but I would not treat it as a safety.

What is still missing is a school you can say, without hesitation:

"If everything else fell apart, I could attend this school, my family could afford it, and I would actually be happy there."

That may ultimately be Alabama, Mississippi State or Ole Miss, but we need financial numbers before we make that determination.

Activities and Application Story

The strongest story I see is not "student who joined lots of things."

It is closer to:

A determined, people-centered student who naturally becomes an encourager, listener and leader in the spaces she enters—and who is beginning to understand that her future probably involves influencing, advocating for, developing or helping other people.

That can connect naturally to law, business, marketing, psychology or leadership without forcing every activity into one artificial theme.

A second theme is **resilience**.

You practiced every day before tryouts. You taught yourself a headspring through repetition. You worked hard to improve your ACT. You experienced not making dance team and describe that as a failure that taught you how to overcome challenges.

A third is **responsibility for other people**.

You are the oldest sibling and oldest cousin on both sides of your family, and you describe the pressure of being the first one to do things and knowing that younger family members are watching you.

That gives us much more to work with than a generic résumé.

Essay Readiness

You have several possible essay directions worth exploring.

Being the first.

The oldest sibling/oldest cousin angle could become a story about pressure, example-setting and learning that leadership does not mean having every answer.

Not making dance team.

This could work if the real story is not "I failed and then worked hard." I would want to know what actually changed inside you afterward and how that experience affected the way you later encouraged or mentored other people.

The person who notices.

You repeatedly describe noticing people who are quiet, uncomfortable or struggling. That could connect friendship, mediation, nursing-home service and your interest in psychology without becoming a generic "I like helping people" essay.

Two versions of Allie.

You describe yourself as very quiet around unfamiliar people and extremely talkative around people you trust. There may be an excellent essay somewhere in the tension between being an extrovert

who can still overthink herself in a new room—and learning how to lead before she feels completely comfortable.

I would not automatically make law, business or your intended major the Common App essay. Your essay should teach an admissions reader something they cannot learn from your transcript and activities list.

Additional Information

Right now, I do not see a clear reason to use the Common App Additional Information section. Being the oldest sibling is meaningful personal context, but we should not turn it into an "extenuating circumstance" unless you had substantial family responsibilities that affected your time or academics. (This is great news because this cuts your writing only one short essay, unless of course, you just want to do the extra writing.)

Likewise, ordinary academic stress does not need an explanation.

If there is additional family responsibility, a major academic disruption, unusual course limitation or other circumstance we have not uncovered, we can reconsider.

Recommendation Strategy

Your strongest recommendation is probably not simply the teacher in whose class you earned the highest grade.

I would look first at an English, history, AP Government, APUSH or AP Literature teacher who has watched you think, write, discuss, lead or persist.

You want a teacher who can say things like:

"Allie notices perspectives other students miss."

"She contributes thoughtfully to discussion."

"Other students naturally look to her in group work."

"She became more confident over time."

"She worked for the result rather than assuming it would come easily."

A performing arts teacher, coach, youth leader or work supervisor could also be useful where an outside recommendation is permitted because that person may be able to describe how you treat and lead other people.

Opportunities to Strengthen

I would not add random clubs. I would strengthen what already exists. Take more ownership in soccer, show choir, performing arts, youth group or FCCLA. Mentor younger students more intentionally. If an opportunity arises to lead a rehearsal, project, service initiative or younger group, take it because it genuinely fits you, not because we need another line on a résumé.

Continue working. Continue meaningful service, particularly service that involves direct relationships with people. And most importantly, start exploring careers now so that your application has direction without pretending you already know exactly what you will do at 35.

Final Action Plan

Do Now

- Finalize your academic data: transcript, weighted/unweighted GPA, senior schedule, grading scale and any rank information.
- Register for another ACT attempt if timing permits, with a specific goal of earning at least a **30 on one test date**.
- Begin your applications to the four schools already on your list.
- Clarify what "therapy" means to you and reduce your career list to two or three pathways we can actively explore.
- Start building detailed activity descriptions with numbers, responsibilities and examples of leadership.
- Identify any academic or extracurricular honors you may have omitted.

Do Next

- Complete one real career-exploration experience for law and one for business/psychology: job shadowing, an informational interview, a college department conversation or another meaningful exposure.
- Develop your Common App activities in strategic order.
- Begin essay brainstorming around the strongest personal stories rather than an intended-major essay.
- Identify your best recommendation options.
- Compare the four schools based on actual net cost and scholarship possibilities, not sticker price alone.

Enhance If Time Allows

- Deepen an existing leadership or mentoring role.
- Continue nursing-home or other relationship-based service if it remains meaningful to you.
- Visit the academic departments connected to your top two possible majors when you visit campuses.
- Explore honors programs after we determine where your testing and GPA make that worthwhile.

Monitor

- ACT scholarship thresholds.
- Priority admission and scholarship deadlines.
- Your senior grades.
- Auburn's admissions position.
- The actual cost of each college after merit and financial aid.
- And your career direction.

The goal over the next few months is not to turn you into a different student. It is to make sure colleges see the student who is already there: someone who is determined, perceptive, people-

oriented, willing to lead and much more complex than a GPA and list of activities can show. You specifically told me that you hope adults notice that you are "complex and not just one thing" and that you want an admissions officer to understand that you are determined and committed to working hard to succeed.

That is exactly what we need the finished application to communicate.