



NOLA KATE SUBER A2 ACHIEVE STUDENT GAP ANALYSIS

WHERE YOU STAND RIGHT NOW

Nola Kate, the first thing I notice is that your application has a pretty significant disconnect between your academic record and your ACT score. You have reported a 4.27 GPA, a substantial amount of dual enrollment coursework, Honors coursework across multiple core subjects, and membership in several academic honor societies. Then sitting beside all of that is an 18 ACT. Those two pieces simply do not tell the same academic story.

That does **not** mean the ACT has to define your college options. In fact, for the schools currently on your list, we have very good ways to manage it. UNA is test optional for admission. UAB allows Fall 2027 students with at least a 3.5 weighted GPA to apply test optional. Samford is also test optional for Fall 2027.

At the same time, I do not want to simply ignore testing. An improved ACT could materially increase your scholarship opportunities at UNA and UAB and potentially change your honors opportunities. So, our strategy is going to be two-pronged: **protect the admission application from a score that does not reflect you, while continuing to see whether we can improve the score enough to make it financially useful.**

Your other major strength is something I like even more: you are not just saying that you want to be a journalist or news anchor someday. You are already doing pieces of that work. You make and edit videos for your school news program, have volunteered to film school events, hold social-media leadership roles, attended the Alabama Scholastic Press Association event, and were part of the class that received the Christina Chambers Sports Broadcast Award. You are also working toward Adobe Premiere certification. That is where your application begins to get interesting.

WHAT IS ALREADY WORKING IN YOUR FAVOR

Your academic rigor is stronger than your ACT suggests

You have reported Honors coursework in math, science, history and English, plus dual enrollment coursework that includes math, biology, English, history, American literature, music appreciation and theatre appreciation. I still need to know **which college awarded the dual enrollment credit and what grades you earned**, because those details matter. But this is not an academically lightweight schedule. I am also not particularly concerned that you did not list AP coursework if dual enrollment has been the advanced-course pathway available to you. We will present the rigor you actually pursued rather than treating AP as the only measure of academic challenge.

Your career direction is unusually clear

You told me that you want to study multimedia or broadcast journalism, that you want to become a news anchor, and that your goal is to keep people informed about what is happening in their community. Then, in the discovery assessment, when you were asked what you would do if money were not a factor, your answer was still news anchor. When you imagined yourself at 35, you were still working in news and helping the community around you. That consistency matters. This does not look like a major you randomly selected because an application asked you to choose one.

You have relevant media experience already

This may become one of the strongest pieces of your application. You have experience making and editing videos for your school news program. You have volunteered to film events. You have social-media leadership experience. You have attended a scholastic press event. You have a broadcast-related class award. You are working toward Premiere certification. We need to make sure these experiences do not get buried underneath a long list of honor societies.

Your work experience is stronger than you may realize

You reported working in customer service/cashier responsibilities with Till We Run Out beginning in 2020 and at Robert Trent Jones Oxmoor Valley beginning in February 2026. You also babysit and pet sit. Your discovery assessment gives me a glimpse of what this actually means. When you were asked about the hardest you have worked, you remembered a Sunday at work during a rain delay when everyone was trying to check in at once. That is real-world communication under pressure. For someone who wants a career in live media, that is relevant. Newsrooms are not quiet environments in which everyone gives you three days to think about your answer. Being able to interact with adults, manage people, process information quickly and remain functional when things get chaotic matters.

Your personality fits the work you say you want to do

You describe yourself as outgoing, energetic and hardworking. Your friends would apparently add funny, loud and playful; your parents describe you as kind, thoughtful and talented; your teachers as hardworking, determined and diligent. You also specifically told me that one of the things you hope adults notice about you is how outgoing and funny you are and how well you work with adults. That matters in journalism. Your application should not read like it was written about a quiet student whose primary identity is belonging to academic clubs. It needs some of **you** in it.

THE MOST IMPORTANT GAPS

GAP 1: The ACT is currently your largest strategic issue

Your reported ACT is an 18 composite, with 19 Math, 23 Science, 18 English and 19 Reading. This is not fatal to your application. But it is financially important.

At UAB, students with a 3.5+ weighted GPA may apply test optional for Fall 2027, and UAB explicitly says that students whose testing does not reflect their GPA and curriculum should consider the test-optional pathway. UAB's Fall 2025 entering average was a 26.6 ACT and 3.84 GPA.

At Samford, the current middle 50% ACT range is 23–29, while its reported middle 50% GPA range is 3.48–4.1. Samford allows Fall 2027 applicants to apply test optional.

At UNA, admission is test optional, but ACT improvement can directly increase scholarship value. For 2027 freshmen, UNA's published academic scholarship table begins increasing awards at a 20 ACT, with additional jumps at 22, 24, 26, 28 and 30. UNA also superscores the ACT.

So, I absolutely think another ACT attempt is worth considering. I would not make your goal “get a 30 or everything is ruined.” That is unnecessary. Our first meaningful milestone is **20**. Then **22–23**. Then **24–25**. Every one of those ranges changes something.

The October 17 ACT has a September 11 registration deadline, with initial scores scheduled for October 27. The December 12 ACT has a November 6 registration deadline.

My testing strategy for you

For now:

- **UNA:** We can apply to the university without using your ACT for admission and continue testing for scholarship purposes.
- **Samford:** I would not submit an 18. Unless an October retest produces a very different score, I would use Samford's test-optional pathway.
- **UAB:** I would not submit the application until we decide whether you are taking the October ACT. Unlike some schools, UAB says the decision to apply with scores or test optional is final once the application is submitted.

That means there is no reason for us to rush UAB out the door in early September.

GAP 2: I need your unweighted GPA and academic context

You gave me a 4.27 GPA but did not know your class rank, and I do not yet have your unweighted GPA. This is important because several scholarship and honors programs use **unweighted GPA**, not the weighted number.

For example, UNA's scholarship matrix specifically uses unweighted GPA, and its published scholarship tiers differ between a 3.00–3.50 and 3.51–4.00 unweighted GPA.

So, I need:

- Your unweighted GPA.
- Whether Thompson reports class rank or decile.
- The college through which each dual enrollment course was taken.
- Your grades in those dual enrollment classes.
- Your senior-year schedule.

Those answers could make your academic story considerably stronger.

GAP 3: Your strongest activity is not yet being presented as your strongest activity

Your current information lists Beta Club, National Honor Society, National English Honor Society, Science National Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta, American Sign Language Honor Society and Quill and Scroll. Those are worthwhile. But I do **not** want an admissions reader to finish your Activities section believing that your main high school contribution was joining honor societies.

Your actual differentiators are more interesting:

- THSTV/media production
- Video editing

- Broadcast work
- NHS social media chair
- Golf-team social media chair
- Paid employment
- Golf
- School-event videography
- The Scholastic Press Association experience and sports broadcast recognition

Your application needs to make those things bigger. I want numbers wherever we can get them: approximately how many videos you have produced, how frequently you film, what you edit, which programs you use, whether you appear on camera, how many events you cover, what you do as social-media chair, how frequently you post and whether you have any audience or engagement data.

GAP 4: There is a leadership story here, but I need more detail

You currently report serving as social media chair for National Honor Society and the Thompson High School women's golf team. You also mentioned the decision to run against your best friend for THSTV class president. I need to know what happened with the THSTV presidency.

- Did you win?
- Are you currently president?
- Were you elected to another position?
- What responsibilities do you actually have?

The decision to run against your best friend is also potentially more interesting than it sounds. It could tell me something about confidence, ambition, friendship, competition or learning to separate a relationship from a goal. I am not manufacturing a leadership story. I think one may already exist. I just need the rest of it.

GAP 5: Your service is adequate, but it should become more connected rather than simply larger

You estimate approximately 20 service hours through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama's Day of Caring and school videography. I do not want you joining random service projects simply so we can increase the number. Your school video work is actually the more interesting direction. You want to use media to inform people. You already know how to film and edit. So, if there is an opportunity this fall to help a school organization, nonprofit, team or community organization tell its story through video, that would make far more sense than collecting miscellaneous volunteer hours.

GAP 6: We need to separate "honors" from "activities"

Honor-society membership is often better treated as an activity unless there was a distinct competitive award or recognition associated with it. Your stronger actual honors currently appear to include: The second-place Warrior Invitational golf finish in April 2026. The Christina Chambers Sports Broadcast Award received by your class through the Alabama Scholastic Press Association. Potential academic recognition connected to selective honor-society induction, depending upon Thompson's criteria. I need the official wording and award level for the broadcast award before I decide exactly how to enter it.

GAP 7: Your college list is good, but it is narrow

You currently gave me:

- University of North Alabama
- Samford University
- UAB
- and an intended area of multimedia or broadcast journalism.

The good news is that **all three schools actually have academic pathways that can lead toward the work you want to do.** The weakness is simply that three schools is not much of a comparison set. We do not necessarily need ten. But I would like to investigate at least one or two additional programs so that you are choosing a college because it is your best fit rather than because it survived a very short original list. I am **not** adding Alabama to your list without you telling me you want it there. If we do add Alabama later, we will apply through Alabama's institutional application rather than Common App.

GAP 8: We need to evaluate the financial side

I do not yet have enough information to determine whether price is a major factor for your family. That matters particularly with Samford because a private university's sticker price and final net price can be very different depending on institutional scholarships. Do not eliminate Samford based on sticker price, but do not fall in love with it without understanding the final financial picture either. We'll compare actual offers.

YOUR APPLICATION STORY

I do **not** think your application story is simply: "I want to be a news anchor." I think it is closer to this: You are an energetic, people-oriented communicator who has already started learning how information gets created, edited and shared. You work comfortably with adults and customers, you make media for your school, you have taken leadership roles involving communication, and you want to turn those strengths into a career informing a community. That is much richer.

ESSAY READINESS

There are several things I want to incubate rather than immediately decide are essays.

- The cheer-team rejection could work because your response was surprisingly matter-of-fact: you were disappointed, moved forward and ultimately realized it was not even something you truly wanted.
- Running against your best friend for THSTV president could be more interesting because there is tension in it.
- The chaotic rain-delay shift at work could reveal how you function around adults, crowds and pressure.
- Your funny/outgoing family personality could give us something much less "college essay-ish" and much more genuinely you.
- And I want to know more about what happens behind the scenes when you create a news story or video.

We do **not** need to force journalism into your Common App essay. Journalism will already be everywhere else in your application.

FINAL ACTION PLAN

Do Now

- Confirm your unweighted GPA, rank/decile if available, senior schedule, and dual enrollment college.
- Register for the October 17 ACT by **September 11** if we decide you are retesting.
- Build your Common App master information.
- Build your Activities section around media, work, leadership and golf rather than simply listing organizations.
- Clarify your THSTV leadership position and the Christina Chambers Sports Broadcast Award.
- Begin the Common App essay incubator.

Do Next

- Complete your working resume.
- Finish your Common App Honors section.
- Develop your media-related activities descriptions.
- Create your recommendation request material.
- Apply to UNA through the **UNA institutional/MyUNA application**, not Common App. UNA's own freshman instructions direct students to create a MyUNA account and use the undergraduate application.
- Prepare Samford and UAB through Common App

Enhance If Time Allows

- Create a small collection of your best broadcast/video work.
- Complete Adobe Premiere certification.
- Do one meaningful media-related service project.
- Explore a local television newsroom, journalist or producer through a job shadow or informational conversation.

Monitor

- ACT improvement.
- Scholarship thresholds.
- Senior grades.
- Honor-college opportunities.
- Financial offers.
- Any additional colleges we decide to add.