



A2 ACHIEVE STUDENT GAP ANALYSIS AFTON BURNETT

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Afton, the first thing I notice about you is that your application is **better than your GPA and ACT make it look on paper**. That does not mean we ignore the numbers. We can't. Your 3.67 weighted GPA, approximately 3.4 unweighted GPA, and current 25 ACT superscore create legitimate risk at Auburn, especially now that we know Auburn First does not give you automatic admission. Your Auburn First GPA did not meet the automatic-admission threshold, and you did not complete the required ALEKS assessment. Auburn therefore has to be treated as a reach rather than a protected option.

But that is only one part of your application. You have taken a substantial number of honors, AP and dual-enrollment courses. You have worked physically demanding jobs. You have worked in a production and route environment. You have repaired real equipment. You have dealt with customers. You have made sales calls. You have been elected to Student Council throughout high school. You have competed in fishing tournaments, played baseball, volunteered extensively through Meals on Wheels, and taught yourself mechanical skills most teenagers simply have never had a reason to learn.

So, our problem is not that there is nothing here. Our problem is making sure colleges see the **whole Afton** instead of reducing you to three numbers. That is the central job of your application.

WHAT IS ALREADY WORKING IN YOUR FAVOR

Your course rigor is stronger than your GPA alone suggests.

You have reported Honors Geometry, Honors Algebra, Honors History, Honors English and Honors Biology; AP Biology, AP Computer Science and AP Environmental Science; plus, a significant group of dual-enrollment or college-level courses.

Your senior schedule continues that rigor with AP Environmental Science, AP Computer Science, Auburn First Macroeconomics and Auburn First Communication.

That matters because I do not want an admissions reader interpreting a 3.67 weighted GPA as evidence that you avoided difficult classes. You didn't. The better story is: **Your GPA is not at the top of the applicant pool, but you continued challenging yourself academically**. That is an important distinction.

Your employment may be the strongest part of your application.

You have reported roughly two years of roofing and mitigation work, more than a year at Coca-Cola, and a summer working as both a mechanic and inside employee at Robin Rents. At Robin Rents,

you worked on skid steers, tillers, blowers and excavators. You diagnosed mechanical problems, repaired hydraulic lines, interacted with customers and made cold calls.

You have also reported IICRC training or certifications related to mitigation, including carpet cleaning, mold remediation and fire remediation. For a high-school student, this is not ordinary part-time employment. This is responsibility, technical experience, customer service, communication, operations and work ethic all wrapped together. We cannot bury it.

Your hands-on mechanical ability is a real differentiator.

You rebuilt a flooded/sunken mud-boat motor. You worked through electrical and ECU problems. You taught yourself aspects of flashing/programming. You have diagnosed equipment failures other people were prepared to send out for repair. You modified the EGR system on your vehicle and reported a measurable change in fuel economy. You describe yourself as mechanical, efficient and capable, and even your friends apparently think of you as the “mechanic.”

That consistency matters. This isn't something we invented for your college application. It is genuinely how you spend your time and how you think.

You have sustained involvement.

Student Council was not something you joined senior year because you suddenly realized college applications were coming. You have been involved throughout high school and were elected as a representative. You also have sustained involvement in fishing, service and work. Your questionnaire reports 75+ hours with Meals on Wheels, close to 100 overall service hours, baseball in grades 9–10, Student Council throughout high school, and Alabama Bass Academy/Bass Tactix involvement. That gives your application depth without needing to manufacture ten clubs.

THE MOST IMPORTANT GAPS

GAP 1: ACADEMIC COMPETITIVENESS FOR AUBURN

This is the biggest gap because Auburn is your first-choice school. Your GPA is largely baked at this point. We can improve it somewhat with excellent senior grades, but we are not going to turn a 3.67 weighted GPA into a 4.2 before admission decisions. So, I do **not** want us wasting energy wishing the GPA were different. We manage the risk.

Your strongest academic strategy now is:

- **Keep the senior schedule rigorous.**
- **Earn the strongest fall grades possible.**
- **Improve the ACT.**
- **Make the rest of the application substantially stronger than the numbers alone.**

Auburn First also has to be handled carefully. Participating in actual Auburn coursework still supports the rigor of your academic record, but because you did not earn the Auburn First automatic-admission pathway, I do not want your application built around trying to explain or defend it. We report it accurately and move on.

What can still change? Senior grades and ACT. **What cannot meaningfully change?** The cumulative high-school record already earned. That's why strategy matters more than regret.

GAP 2: YOUR ACT IS ADEQUATE FOR SOME PURPOSES BUT NOT YET HELPING YOU ENOUGH

Your current superscore is 25. Your reported section scores include:

- **Reading: 27**
- **English: 26**
- **Science: 26**
- **Math: 23**

The obvious testing weakness is math. This is particularly important because you are considering business, finance and economics-related areas. It does not mean you cannot study them. It does mean that an improvement in math would help both the admissions picture and our confidence that you are academically ready for the quantitative coursework those majors may require.

For Auburn specifically, we have already identified the ACT as the single academic variable most capable of materially changing your current position. Our prior analysis found that moving from a 25 toward a 27, 28 or higher would meaningfully improve the Auburn case.

And testing isn't only about Auburn admission. A higher score can also affect scholarship competitiveness at multiple schools. So, ACT preparation is not busywork right now. It has a purpose.

GAP 3: WE HAVE AN INTENDED MAJOR, BUT WE DO NOT YET HAVE A FULLY DEVELOPED “WHY”

You originally wrote:

- **Major: AGG Business**
- **Minor: Finance or Forestry**

and said you want to graduate with a job offer and eventually have an impact by providing a service. I think there may be something very good here, but we need to clarify it. I suspect you mean an agricultural business/agricultural economics-type program, particularly at Auburn.

What I do **not** yet have is the bridge between:

Afton the mechanic / outdoorsman / worker / future business owner

and

Agricultural Business.

That bridge may absolutely exist. Agribusiness can involve land, equipment, sales, operations, finance, commodities, management, agriculture-related businesses and entrepreneurship. That sounds much more like you than sitting behind a desk doing generic business coursework simply because “business” sounds useful. But you need to understand why **you** want it. Right now, “AGG business” looks more like a choice than a developed academic direction. That is a gap we can fix.

GAP 4: FINANCE AND FORESTRY ARE TWO VERY DIFFERENT INTERESTS

This is not necessarily a problem. Actually, I think they tell me something interesting about you.

You constantly come back to two ideas:

How do things physically work?

and

How does money/business work?

You have said you would like to understand the stock market and create cash flow rather than having all of your income tied directly to the number of hours you work. You also like biology, hunting, fishing, land and the outdoors. So, finance and forestry may look disconnected on paper, but they are actually showing us two sides of you. The question is which one belongs in your **career**, and which one simply belongs in your **life**. That is what we need to explore.

GAP 5: YOU NEED MORE CAREER CLARITY – NOT MORE RESUME BUILDING

I am not going to tell you to join three new clubs. You are a senior. That would be artificial. Instead, I want you to use the experience you already have to answer some bigger questions.

You say that by age 35, you would ideally be self-employed or managing a good business, living on at least five acres, providing a trade or service to commercial or residential customers, and earning money based on what you provide rather than simply exchanging hours for dollars. You define success as having time, money and health at the same time. That is actually much more specific than saying: “I want to go into business.”

Your long-term direction appears to be **ownership, management and service delivery**. College needs to help you build toward that. The gap is figuring out which industry you want to know well enough eventually to own something in it.

GAP 6: YOUR ACTIVITIES ARE STRONGER THAN THE WAY THEY WERE ORIGINALLY DESCRIBED

Your original questionnaire made some substantial experiences sound tiny.

- “Mechanic.”
- “Plant worker.”
- “Roofing and mitigation.”
- “Cold calls.”

Those descriptions don't show the actual responsibility. This is a communication gap, not an experience gap. We need exact:

- Employment dates.
- School-year hours.
- Summer hours.
- Equipment repaired.
- Customer responsibilities.
- Sales responsibilities.
- IICRC credentials.
- Service hours.
- Fishing tournament participation.
- Student Council responsibilities.
- Mechanical project hours.

This matters especially because you may have worked **thousands of paid hours** by graduation. That is a completely different admissions story than: “Had a summer job.”

GAP 7: WE STILL NEED TO CLEAN UP THE HONORS SECTION

You have legitimate academic recognition, but the exact record is still muddy. We currently have:

- **National Honor Society**
- **Academic Booster Award**
- **A/B Honor Roll**
- possibly other school-based academic recognition.

Your questionnaire originally listed a GPA-based award and NHS over multiple years. What we still need are exact years and official award names. This is not a major weakness. It is simply unfinished application housekeeping.

GAP 8: YOUR SERVICE HAS MEANING, BUT WE SHOULD NOT TURN IT INTO SOMETHING IT ISN'T

You have close to 100 hours of service and at least 75 hours connected to Meals on Wheels. More important than the number is what you said about it. You told us Meals on Wheels made you more appreciative of your own life because you had the opportunity to talk to people and hear their stories. That sounds genuine. I do not think you need to launch a nonprofit senior year. Keep serving when you can. What matters is that we describe the experience honestly and show that the people mattered to you, not just the hours.

GAP 9: YOUR APPLICATION NEEDS CONTEXT FOR WORK

I am increasingly convinced that we may need the Common App Additional Information section. Not as an excuse. Not: **“My GPA isn't higher because I worked.”** Instead: **Here is how many hours I actually worked while also taking AP, honors and college-level classes.** If the hours are substantial, an admissions officer deserves that context.

Our earlier Common App strategy identified exactly this issue: employment hours, responsibilities and advanced coursework may need factual context beyond the Activities section's character limits. That lets the reader decide what those responsibilities mean.

GAP 10: THE COLLEGE LIST STILL NEEDS A FINANCIAL LAYER

Right now, we are working with:

- **Auburn**
- **Alabama**
- **Mississippi State**
- **Ole Miss**

That is a reasonable concentrated list if those are genuinely the schools you prefer. Auburn is the most admissions-sensitive of the group based on the assessment we have already completed. But I do not yet have enough information about:

- What your family expects to pay.

- Whether merit aid matters.
- Whether you would choose one school over another based on cost.
- Whether you would live on campus all four years.
- Whether scholarships could change your preference.
- Whether you would consider another school if it offered a significantly stronger financial package.

Until we answer those questions, we have an **admissions list**, but not a fully developed **financial-fit list**.

YOUR APPLICATION STORY

I don't want colleges finishing your application thinking: **"He's a 3.4 student who likes fishing."** That completely misses you.

I want them to understand: **You are a practical, hands-on problem solver who has spent a substantial part of high school working alongside adults, learning how equipment, customers and businesses function. You learn through doing, you are willing to take things apart to understand them, and your long-term goal is to take that practical knowledge into management or ownership.** That is the story already emerging from your experiences.

ESSAY READINESS

You have good essay material. My first choice remains the sunken mud-boat motor. The motor itself isn't the essay. The interesting part is your instinct to keep asking: **Why isn't this working?** rather than immediately accepting: **This doesn't work.** That thinking pattern connects naturally to your mechanical projects, employment and personality without turning the essay into a resume.

Other possible material includes:

- **The stump-grinder fuse:** Everyone is prepared to send the machine away; you keep diagnosing and find the small problem.
- **Learning to work with adults:** Roofing, plant work, customers, mechanics, sales and what being the youngest person in a workplace taught you.
- **"Knowledge over age":** Your belief that if someone knows more than you, you listen, regardless of age.

I would still **not lead with the ditch/wreck story** unless we later uncover a reason that it tells us something the stronger stories cannot. You have already told us it changed your sense of invincibility and contributed to maturity, but the mechanical stories reveal growth without introducing an unnecessary judgment question.

RECOMMENDATION GAP

Mr. Sanders remains interesting because you independently identified him as your favorite teacher. But "he was a fun teacher" is not enough. I need to know what he taught and what he actually knows about you.

A useful recommendation would tell colleges something like:

- You ask good questions.
- You persist.
- You have matured.
- You participate differently than your grades might suggest.
- You solve problems.
- You are dependable.
- You interact well with adults and peers.

An employer could potentially tell an entirely different story: responsibility, mechanical instinct, communication, punctuality, willingness to learn and trust. Those letters should complement each other rather than repeat the resume.

SCHOLARSHIP GAP

The biggest scholarship lever still within your control is testing. Your work, service, leadership and technical experience may also help with competitive scholarships, but a 25 ACT may limit some merit opportunities that become more realistic with a stronger score.

We therefore need to treat **admission** and **scholarship competition** as two separate questions. Getting admitted does not automatically mean receiving the financial package you want.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NOW

Do Now

1. Finish and submit Alabama.

Your institutional application gives us substantial space to quantify your rigor, leadership, service and especially your employment.

2. Finish the Common App master file.

Activities, Honors, testing, education and Additional Information.

3. Submit Ole Miss and Mississippi State promptly.

Those should not wait while we perfect Auburn.

4. Prepare seriously for the next ACT.

Math deserves particular attention, but we want movement anywhere we can gain superscore points.

5. Give me exact employment data.

This may materially change how strong your application looks.

Do Next

6. Complete the boat-motor essay incubator.

I want raw details, not polished writing.

7. Clarify “Agricultural Business.”

We need to know why that degree makes sense to you, not simply that you selected it.

8. Compare finance, forestry, agribusiness and business/operations careers.

Not from a brochure. Talk to people doing the work.

9. Lock down your recommendation strategy.

Especially Mr. Sanders and potentially an employer.

10. Keep senior grades strong.

This matters particularly for Auburn.

Enhance If Time Allows

Shadow or talk with:

- **One business owner in a trade/service company**
- **One person in agribusiness or equipment operations**
- **One forestry/land professional**
- **One finance professional**

Not to add four lines to your resume. To figure out which version of your future actually feels right.

Monitor

- ACT scores
- Senior grades
- Auburn application timing
- Scholarship applications and deadlines
- Applicant portals
- Whether the current four-school list remains financially realistic