



A2 ACHIEVE COLLEGE & CAREER ALIGNMENT ASSESSMENT AFTON BURNETT

THE BIG PICTURE

Afton, when I look at you as a whole, I don't see someone who is actually “undecided.” You may not know your exact career yet, but there is a very consistent direction underneath almost everything you've told me.

You like **useful knowledge**.

You like knowing how something works.

You like fixing problems.

You are comfortable around equipment.

You enjoy being outside.

You are interested in money, business and ownership.

You prefer practical competence over titles.

You have spent a lot of time working around adults.

And when you picture your future, you don't picture a specific corporate title. You picture **owning or running something that provides a real service**. That's a direction. It just isn't a job title yet.

You describe yourself as “mechanical, efficient, capable,” while your friends would apparently describe you as fun, quick and a mechanic. That is far more informative to me than any generic career assessment.

YOUR ACADEMIC PROFILE

Your academic profile is mixed in a useful way.

Your current GPA is approximately:

3.67 weighted

3.4 unweighted

with a current ACT superscore of **25**.

Those numbers alone do not make you the strongest academic applicant at the most competitive school on your list. But you have also taken a significant amount of advanced coursework.

That tells me two things.

1. First, you are willing to challenge yourself.
2. Second, your strengths may not always be best measured by traditional classroom performance.

You have told me that your favorite subject is **biology** and your least favorite is **math**. That matters when we discuss majors. I do not interpret “I don't like math” as “you cannot do a business degree.”

I do interpret it as a reason not to casually pick a quantitatively heavy field without understanding the coursework. Your career choice should not require you to spend four years doing the thing you dislike most simply because the career sounds lucrative.

HOW YOU APPEAR TO LEARN

You look like an **applied learner**. You learn by:

- Seeing the problem
- Touching the problem,
- Taking something apart
- Testing an idea
- Getting something wrong
- Trying again
- Asking someone who knows more
- Eventually understanding the system

That is very different from memorizing something long enough to put it on a test.

You taught yourself mechanical skills partly because things broke and you had to figure out what happened. You rebuilt a sunken motor, diagnosed hydraulic and electrical problems, and have independently researched engines and diesel work.

You also have an interesting amount of humility underneath the confidence. Your phrase “**knowledge over age**” tells me a lot. You told us that if someone knows more than you, you're going to listen. That is a valuable trait in any technical or management career. The best managers are rarely the people pretending they know everything.

YOUR INTELLECTUAL STRENGTHS

Systems thinking

You naturally want to understand how individual parts affect the whole. That is obvious mechanically, but it can transfer into business. A company is also a system:

- People
- Equipment
- Money
- Customers
- Inventory
- Scheduling
- Sales
- Operations
- Problems

You may eventually discover that the reason business ownership appeals to you is not just money. It may be because running a business gives you another system to figure out.

Troubleshooting

You seem to enjoy diagnosis more than repetition. A machine that works perfectly is useful. A machine that doesn't work gives you something to solve. That instinct can translate into operations management, entrepreneurship, equipment management, construction, logistics, restoration, land management and many other fields.

Applied communication

You have said you communicate well with adults and customers when you try. Your work has already required customer interaction and sales-related conversations. That's important because technical ability alone does not create a business owner. You eventually need to explain, sell, negotiate, manage and lead.

Independent learning

You do not appear to wait for someone to create a curriculum for you. You research engines, hunting and other subjects because you want to understand them. That independence can become a major advantage in college if you learn to apply the same curiosity to academic coursework.

CAREER DIRECTION

I would not give you one job and tell you, "This is what you should do." I see a **career cluster**. The center of that cluster is:

TECHNICAL + OPERATIONS + BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

That is where most of your experiences meet.

Career Direction 1: Agribusiness / Agricultural Operations

This is why I don't think "AGG Business" is random. If you are interested in land, equipment, outdoor industries, business, sales and eventual ownership, agribusiness can potentially connect those worlds. Depending on the role, that can mean:

- Equipment
- Agricultural sales
- Operations
- Distribution
- Finance
- Land
- Inputs
- Commodities
- Farm-related businesses
- Management
- Entrepreneurship

The question I want you answering is not: "**Do I want to be a farmer?**" Agribusiness is much broader than that. The better question is: "**Do I want to build a career around businesses connected to land, equipment, agriculture and rural industries?**" If the answer is yes, this deserves serious attention.

Career Direction 2: Equipment / Rental / Fleet Operations

Your Robin Rents experience may be more informative than you realize. You worked around equipment. You repaired it. You dealt with customers. You saw the inside side of the business. You made cold calls. That's already the beginning of understanding an equipment business from multiple angles.

A future path could involve:

- Equipment rental
- Dealership operations
- Fleet management
- Sales
- Service management
- Branch management
- Regional operations
- Eventually ownership

This combines mechanical knowledge with people and business. That may fit you extremely well.

Career Direction 3: Construction / Restoration / Commercial Services

You have roofing and mitigation experience and say you can picture yourself providing commercial or residential services someday. That is another strong clue. There is a huge difference between: **working a trade** and **owning the company that delivers the trade**. You may ultimately prefer the second.

A college degree in a business, operations, construction or related area combined with your field experience could be a powerful combination. Your practical experience would allow you to understand employees and customers in a way that someone who has only studied business may not.

Career Direction 4: Entrepreneurship

You consistently return to ownership. Not because entrepreneurship sounds trendy. You specifically describe wanting your income eventually tied to **what you provide**, rather than only the hours you personally work. That tells me you are already thinking about leverage:

- Employees
- Systems
- Capital
- Equipment
- Customers
- Service delivery
- Ownership

Those concepts are fundamental to entrepreneurship. I would still strongly encourage you to work for good companies before trying to start one. Learn on someone else's payroll. See what good management looks like. See what bad management looks like. Learn pricing. Hiring. Insurance. Taxes. Sales. Customer acquisition. Scheduling. Cash flow. Then decide what you want to build.

Career Direction 5: Forestry / Land-Based Business

Forestry is worth exploring because of your genuine outdoor interests and your interest in land. But I would not choose forestry solely because: **“I like hunting and being outside.”** You need to understand what forestry professionals actually do. There may also be a middle ground that fits you better:

- **Forestry + business**
- **Timber operations**
- **Land management**
- **Equipment operations**
- **Timber procurement**
- **Forest-products business**
- **Real estate/land services**

You may discover that you like the **business around forestry** more than the technical profession itself. That would still make forestry relevant.

Career Direction 6: Finance

Finance is the one I want you to investigate most carefully. You are clearly interested in:

- Money
- Cash flow
- Markets
- Investing
- Eventually creating wealth that is not completely tied to hourly labor.

That is a legitimate interest. But I do not yet know whether you are interested in **finance as a profession** or **financial literacy as a tool for becoming a successful business owner**. Those are very different.

You may not need to become a financial analyst. You may need to become the business owner who understands cash flow, capital, debt, investment, margin, return, risk, and financial statements.

A finance minor could potentially make more sense than a finance major if your primary interest remains operations or ownership. That is exactly why we explore before committing.

MAJORS I WOULD PUT ON YOUR EXPLORATION LIST

I would investigate categories such as:

- **Agricultural Business / Agricultural Economics**
- **Business Management**
- **Operations Management**
- **Supply Chain / Logistics**
- **Entrepreneurship**
- **Finance, potentially as a minor or secondary focus**
- **Forestry / Forest Business**
- **Construction Management**
- **Business programs connected to equipment, land or commercial services**

I am not saying you should apply to every one of these. I am saying these are the academic paths that best connect the recurring pieces of your story.

Something Important About the Word “Business”

Do not choose “business” simply because you eventually want to own a company. You do not need a business degree to own a business. What you need is: **an industry you understand** plus **business skills**. Sometimes the smartest future owner studies the industry first and adds business education.

For example:

- Construction + business
- Forestry + finance
- Agriculture + management
- Technical operations + entrepreneurship

That could ultimately fit you better than a completely general business degree.

CAREER EXPLORATION YOU SHOULD ACTUALLY DO

Talk with an owner of a trade/service business.

Ask:

- How did you start?
- What did you learn too late?
- What part of running the company has nothing to do with the trade?
- What do you wish you had studied?
- What skills make employees valuable?
- What kills profit?

Talk with someone in agribusiness.

You are trying to determine whether the industry itself interests you or whether you simply like the idea of the degree.

Talk with someone in forestry or land management.

Ask what an ordinary Tuesday actually looks like. Not the exciting day. The normal day.

Talk with someone in finance.

Ask what entry-level finance work actually involves. See how much of it you enjoy.

Keep working.

Your jobs are already some of your best career exploration. You have learned through experience that you enjoy mechanical work, customers and practical problem solving. That information is valuable.

YOUR LEADERSHIP PROFILE

I don't see you as the student who desperately wants to be president of everything. That's okay. You actually identified yourself as someone who tends more toward **support** than leading from the front. But you have still been elected to Student Council. You have mentored younger students and siblings. Coworkers ask you mechanical questions. You step in when something is not working. That suggests a practical leadership style: **competence first, title second**.

People trust you because you know how to help. That kind of leadership becomes extremely important in field operations and business management. A future supervisor who knows nothing about the work being performed can struggle to gain credibility. You may someday have the opposite advantage.

YOUR ACTIVITIES

Your extracurricular list works because it is not artificially polished. You have:

- Student Council
- Fishing
- Baseball
- Service
- Work
- Independent mechanical projects
- Family responsibilities

Those things show different sides of you.

I would continue putting employment and mechanical work near the top because those are the activities that best differentiate you. Our Common App strategy already identified work as too substantive to bury beneath ordinary club membership.

Fishing belongs too. Not because we need to turn your entire identity into “outdoorsman,” but because it genuinely occupies your time and connects to your interests.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Your work may ultimately be one of the most valuable things you did in high school. Not because roofing houses is more prestigious than joining a club. It isn't about prestige. It is because you've learned things most classrooms cannot teach directly:

- How adults communicate at work.
- How customers behave.
- How equipment costs money when it sits broken.
- How being late affects other people.
- How physical work feels after ten hours.
- How sales requires hearing “no.”
- How much knowledge experienced workers carry.
- How small mistakes become expensive.
- How businesses actually deliver something to a customer.

You even told us that one of the things you've learned outside school is simply **how to get along with people in the real world**. That's valuable.

SERVICE AND COMMUNITY

Meals on Wheels is the service experience I would emphasize. Not because it has the biggest number. Because you talked about the people. You said listening to recipients' stories gave you more appreciation for your own life. That tells me something different from your work and mechanical experiences. Keep that piece.

HONORS AND RECOGNITION

Your current academic-recognition list appears to include:

- National Honor Society.
- Academic Booster recognition.
- A/B Honor Roll.
- Potential IICRC credentials, although I would generally treat those as technical certifications rather than traditional academic honors.

The honors section is not the centerpiece of your application. That's fine. Your distinction comes from the combination of what you have actually done, not a wall of awards.

YOUR STRONGEST DIFFERENTIATORS

If I had to explain what makes you interesting to a college in five points, I would choose these:

1. Real Work Experience

Multiple workplaces and genuinely substantial responsibility.

2. Mechanical Problem Solving

You do not just say you like engineering or machines. You actually repair them.

3. Technical + Business Interest

You can talk about an ECU and also ask how someone builds cash flow. That's an interesting combination.

4. Comfort Working With Adults

You have already spent meaningful time in adult work environments and customer interactions.

5. Emerging Maturity

You talk openly about mistakes, balance and learning. Your discovery questionnaire even says your imaginary TED Talk would be about **making mistakes and then trying to grow**. That is a stronger theme than pretending you have always made perfect decisions.

THE STORY BEHIND YOUR APPLICATION

The natural story is: **You have spent high school learning how things work.**

At first, that sounds mechanical. Engines. Hydraulics. Equipment. But the story gets bigger.

You have also started learning how **people work** through customer service and adult workplaces. And how **businesses work** through employment, sales and your interest in ownership. That gives us a very coherent application without forcing every activity into the same box.

THE COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT I THINK FITS YOU

I suspect you are likely to do well at a university where there is a strong combination of:

- **School spirit**
- **Practical career pathways**
- **Large alumni and employer networks**
- **Internships and applied experience**
- **Multiple business and land-related academic options**
- **Room to change direction without changing universities**
- **An active campus rather than an academically isolated environment**
- **Access to outdoor recreation**

You want college partly because you want independence, maturity and relationships. You specifically said you want to meet people, create connections, live on your own and learn how to survive independently. That makes a traditional residential university experience appealing for reasons that go well beyond the classroom.

YOUR CURRENT COLLEGE LIST

Your working list is:

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

Auburn is clearly emotionally and strategically different because it is your preferred school and you already have Auburn First experience. But Auburn First cannot be treated as an automatic-admission advantage now. Our updated Auburn assessment places Auburn in the reach category with your current academic profile.

The other three give us additional large-university options in the region and allow us to move applications quickly while taking more time with Auburn.

What I still want to compare school by school is:

- **Which has the best academic pathway for what you actually want to study?**
- **Which gives you the best internship/employment connections?**
- **Which gives you the best financial package?**

- **Which campus feels right once you are no longer comparing everything to Auburn?**

That last question matters. You need at least one school besides Auburn where you can genuinely say: **“If Auburn doesn't happen, I could be happy here.”**

FINANCIAL FIT

This is still one of our least developed areas. We need to understand whether: **cost matters heavily, merit scholarships will drive the decision, your family has a target annual budget, and a major scholarship could change your school ranking.**

Because your test score may influence merit opportunities, ACT improvement has both admissions and financial value. Do not assume the school with the lowest sticker price will automatically be the least expensive. We compare actual offers.

ADMISSIONS POSITIONING

Your application should emphasize:

Work

This goes high.

Mechanical problem solving

This gives admissions officers something memorable.

Course rigor

We make sure they do not look only at GPA.

Leadership and service

These show that work is not the entirety of your high-school experience.

Maturity

Show it through stories rather than telling colleges: **“I am mature.”**

Business ownership interest

Use this where it naturally answers questions about your future. Do not force it into every response.

WHAT I WOULD DE-EMPHASIZE

Auburn First disappointment

Report it accurately. Do not build the application around defending it.

Hunting as the entire personality

Hunting and fishing are real interests, and I want them represented. They are simply not the most interesting thing about you.

Generic business language

Avoid:

- **“I want to major in business because I want to be successful.”** That tells a college nothing.
- **“I work hard”** Never say it when we can prove it with hours and responsibilities instead.

ESSAY DIRECTIONS

1. The Sunken Motor

Best current option. Shows how your brain works.

2. Knowledge Over Age

Could become a thoughtful essay about learning from people with experience and realizing competence has little to do with age or title.

3. Adult Workplaces

A teenager learning how to function in roofing, production, mechanical and customer-facing environments.

4. The Fuse

A small mechanical story about noticing what other people stopped looking for.

The Common App essay should **not** explain why you want to major in business. It should let the reader meet you.

RECOMMENDATION STRATEGY

Mr. Sanders

Potentially useful if he can talk about you as a learner rather than simply giving you a character endorsement.

Employer

Potentially very valuable for scholarships or schools that allow supplemental recommendations because an employer can verify the unusual level of responsibility behind the Activities section.

Counselor

Should understand the amount of advanced coursework and employment you have carried simultaneously.

Each person should tell a different piece of the story.

SCHOLARSHIP POSITIONING

For competitive scholarships, I would lean into:

- **Employment**
- **Leadership**
- **Service**

- **Technical skill**
- **Business/entrepreneurial interests**
- **Community orientation**

You have said you want a future career where you provide something useful and help people grow. That's much stronger scholarship material than trying to make you sound like someone who spent high school collecting awards.

BIGGEST RISKS

- 1. Auburn academic competitiveness**
- 2. Current ACT, particularly for Auburn and merit opportunities**
- 3. Not yet having a fully developed reason for your intended major**
- 4. Failing to quantify the scale of your employment**
- 5. Allowing "Auburn or bust" to prevent you from seriously evaluating the other schools**

BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES

- 1. Improve the ACT.**
- 2. Finish senior fall strongly.**
- 3. Turn your work history into one of the strongest parts of the application.**
- 4. Develop the boat-motor essay.**
- 5. Clarify the relationship among agribusiness, finance, forestry and ownership.**
- 6. Use your actual experience rather than adding artificial senior-year activities.**

WHAT I WOULD DO NEXT IF YOU WERE MY STUDENT

You are my student, so this is exactly what we're doing.

1. First, we finish Alabama, Ole Miss and Mississippi State rather than allowing every application to wait on Auburn.
2. Then we finish your Common App Activities and Honors sections and calculate your real employment hours.
3. You prepare hard for the next ACT.
4. At the same time, we incubate the boat-motor essay rather than forcing a finished draft too quickly.
5. Then I want you to have several very practical career conversations: a business owner, someone working in agribusiness or equipment, someone in forestry/land management, and someone in finance.
6. After those conversations, we revisit your major.
7. Then we build Auburn very deliberately.

Your application plan already reflects that distinction: the earlier schools move first while Auburn receives the deeper application review.