



A2 ACHIEVE STUDENT GAP ANALYSIS CHLOE KNIGHTEN

Overall Assessment

Chloe, you have the beginnings of a very compelling college application because there is already a clear connection between who you are, what you enjoy, the work you have chosen, and where you think you want to go professionally.

On paper, you have a 4.0 GPA, advanced coursework, AP U.S. History, dual-enrollment classes, and academic recognition. You also made a significant academic jump by moving from grade-level classes into advanced classes within one year. That matters. It shows that you did not simply maintain a strong academic record; you deliberately increased the level of challenge.

But academics are only one part of your story.

You are currently working in retail at Hailos and interning with Design Theory. You previously worked at Point Mallard Nutrition. You have been an equestrian for most of high school, played golf, participated in FFA and Powder Puff, worked on your homecoming float, taken a leadership role in a service project, and mentored younger children at the barn.

More importantly, there is a thread running through all of it.

You describe yourself as outgoing, busy and chic. Other people describe you as supportive, energetic, bold, mature, confident, talkative, smart, open and creative. You say your greatest strengths are communication, creativity and getting things done. You are interested in both fashion and interiors, you enjoy working with people, and you ultimately want to own your own design studio.

That gives us something much better than simply saying, "Chloe likes interior design."

Your emerging story is creativity + people + execution + entrepreneurship.

That is the story I want us to develop.

You aren't only interested in making things look good. You notice people. You like working with people. You understand retail. You enjoy design. You take initiative. And when asked what you would learn if money were unlimited, you said you would learn how to run a successful company.

That last piece is especially important because your long-term goal is not simply to work as a designer. You want to own a studio.

That is where I think your application can become memorable.

Your Strongest Assets

Your academic record is strong.

A 4.0 gives us a good foundation. The fact that you increased your rigor is even better. Advanced Algebra I and II, advanced English, Pre-AP U.S. History, AP U.S. History and dual-enrollment coursework all help show academic readiness.

I do want your final transcript and senior schedule before I call the academic portion finished. We need to know whether the 4.0 is weighted or unweighted and exactly what you are taking senior year.

You already have career-related experience.

This may be one of your biggest advantages.

You are not applying for a design major because you watched HGTV and decided interiors looked fun. You already have an internship with Design Theory. That gives us the opportunity to demonstrate that you have actually spent time around the profession before choosing it.

That internship needs to become one of the most important entries on your résumé and application.

Your retail experience is relevant.

Do not underestimate this.

You specifically said that people often don't realize how much skill it takes to sell different categories of merchandise to different types of customers. You understand that retail requires product knowledge, communication, adaptability and the ability to read people.

Those skills translate beautifully into a future career in design because designers do not work in isolation. They work with clients, vendors, contractors and other professionals.

You have a genuine creative side.

Interior design, fashion, decorating, your homecoming float, visual displays and small projects all show up repeatedly in your answers, and not just once.

That consistency makes me more confident that design is a real interest rather than an answer you picked because you felt like you needed a major.

Your equestrian experience is much more valuable than you realize.

This is currently underrepresented.

You were an equestrian from freshman through junior year. You identify your showing experience as one of the accomplishments that required the most perseverance. You also talked about learning how to connect with a horse instead of giving up and simply trying another horse. You have had younger riders naturally follow your lead and you have mentored children at the barn.

That could become one of the strongest activities on your Common App once I know more about it.

The Most Important Gaps

GAP 1: We need to determine whether you mean Interior Design or Interior Architecture.

Priority: Critical

This is the most important discovery in your entire gap analysis.

You wrote that you want to major in Interior Architecture and named Auburn and Alabama as your primary college interests.

But those terms do not mean exactly the same thing from school to school.

Auburn has a four-year CIDA-accredited **B.S. in Interior Design**. Students begin as Pre-Interior Design students and, after the first year, go through a portfolio review; Auburn says roughly the top 55–60 students advance into the Interior Design major.

Auburn also has a completely different **Interior Architecture** pathway. That program is connected to Auburn's professional Architecture program, is highly selective, and leads to both a Bachelor of Architecture and Bachelor of Interior Architecture. Auburn specifically states that the Bachelor of Interior Architecture cannot be earned by itself.

The University of Alabama offers a CIDA- and NASAD-accredited **B.S. in Interior Design**, not a degree called Interior Architecture. Its curriculum includes residential, commercial, hospitality and specialized interiors along with construction, lighting and AutoCAD.

Meanwhile, the University of Tennessee actually offers a four-year **Bachelor of Science in Interior Architecture**.

So, before we build the final college list, I want you to answer a bigger question:

Do you want to become a professional interior designer who works heavily with space planning, interiors, materials, clients and design, or do you want the more architectural side of the built environment as well?

Your Design Theory internship may be the best place to help us answer that.

GAP 2: Your ACT needs attention.

Priority: High

Your current ACT composite and superscore are both 24.

Your GPA helps you tremendously, but I do not want us to leave the ACT alone.

For Fall 2027, Auburn is requiring first-year applicants to submit ACT or SAT scores. Auburn's most recent published freshman profile shows a middle 50% ACT range of 25–31 for Alabama residents entering in Fall 2025. Your GPA sits comfortably within Auburn's recent GPA range, but your 24 ACT is below that recent middle-50% test band.

That does **not** mean Auburn is off the table.

It means improving the ACT is one of the cleanest ways available to make an already strong academic profile stronger.

For A2 Achieve purposes, I would make **28+ the next target**, while continuing to push higher if possible. That is not a magic admission number. It simply moves you into a much stronger strategic position.

The University of Alabama gives us more flexibility. For students entering in 2027, UA only requires an ACT/SAT score if the cumulative high school GPA is below 3.0, so with your reported 4.0, you have the option to make a strategic decision about score submission there.

UT Knoxville requires scores from all first-year applicants, making improvement even more important if we add Tennessee to your list.

GAP 3: You need to start building a design body of work.

Priority: Critical

You do **not** need to suddenly become a professional designer before college. But I want us to begin documenting the way you think creatively.

Auburn's Interior Design students eventually face a portfolio review after the first year. Mississippi State requires a portfolio review between the second and third years. Florida State also uses first-year design work as part of a competitive progression process.

That tells me something important: these programs care about much more than whether you have good taste.

They care about the **design process**.

Between now and graduation, I would love to capture four to six pieces that show how you think. They could come from your Design Theory internship, homecoming float work, a room redesign, furniture or space planning, a retail display, sketches, mood boards, a small renovation concept or an independent design project.

For every project, save the rough beginning, not just the pretty ending.

I want photographs, sketches, ideas, measurements, changes, mistakes and final work.

GAP 4: Your Design Theory internship is almost completely undocumented.

Priority: Critical

Right now, all I know is that you are interning at Design Theory. That is not enough.

I want to know:

- Your internship dates.
- Approximate hours per week.
- Who supervises you.
- What you actually do.

- What kinds of projects you have observed or assisted with.
- Whether you have attended client meetings.
- Whether you have helped with materials, measurements, sourcing, floor plans, installations, vendor communication, organization, presentations or selections.
- What software you have seen or used.
- What you understand about professional interior design now that you did not understand before.
- Whether there are projects you are allowed to photograph or describe.

This experience could become one of the strongest parts of your entire application. We need the detail to use it.

GAP 5: Your employment history needs to be fully developed.

Priority: High

You have at least three significant work experiences: Point Mallard Nutrition, Hailos and Design Theory.

I need dates, titles, average hours, responsibilities and accomplishments for all of them.

Hailos may be particularly useful because your Student Discovery Assessment revealed something your résumé questionnaire did not: you have learned how to work with different types of customers and merchandise.

That is client-facing experience.

For a future designer and business owner, that matters.

GAP 6: Your equestrian experience needs to move onto the résumé and Common App.

Priority: High

You mentioned equestrian participation only at the very end of your résumé questionnaire, yet it appears repeatedly in the deeper assessment.

That tells me it is probably far more important than you initially thought it was.

We need the barn name, years, riding discipline, showing level, approximate weekly hours, competitions, placements or recognition, responsibilities for horse care if applicable, mentoring of younger riders and the story behind the horse you had to learn to connect with.

This could easily rank above several of the activities currently on your resume.

GAP 7: Homecoming is much stronger than "volunteering with homecoming."

Priority: High

You said working on your homecoming float may be the hardest you have worked, that it is your favorite part of first semester, and that your class has won all three years so far.

That tells me there is a story here.

I want to know what you design, build, organize, paint, create or manage.

How many hours go into it?

How large is the team?

Have you ever had an idea incorporated into the final design?

What happens when something goes wrong?

We need to turn "helped with homecoming float" into what it actually represents.

GAP 8: Several activities are still just names.

Priority: Medium-High

Golf, FFA and Powder Puff need more information.

For each, I need years involved, approximate hours, responsibilities, accomplishments and what your involvement actually looked like.

An activity does not become more impressive because we make it sound fancy. It becomes more useful when we understand what you actually did.

GAP 9: Your leadership is hidden because you are looking for titles.

Priority: High

You already told me younger children at the barn naturally followed your lead. You mentor younger riders. You try to mediate disagreements. You have stood up for others. You led media for an advisory service project.

That is leadership.

Our job now is to document it.

I particularly want more information about the advisory service project. What organization did it benefit? What did "leading media" mean? What did you create? How many people did the project reach? What was your responsibility?

GAP 10: Your service story needs documentation.

Priority: Medium

You mentioned helping teachers during free periods, participating in a service project for people recovering from addiction, working on homecoming and planning to volunteer with games. We need organization names, dates, hours and specific contributions.

The addiction-recovery project is particularly interesting because you also identified addiction, homelessness and starvation as problems you care about.

There may be an authentic service thread here that we have not fully uncovered.

GAP 11: Your academic honors need to be verified and properly named.

Priority: High

You reported earning the highest average in freshman English, History and Math and said you would send photographs of the awards.

I want those photographs.

Depending on how Priceville names the recognition, these may become three legitimate academic honors for your résumé and Common App.

We should not call them anything until we see exactly what the certificates say.

GAP 12: Your technical skill set is still thin for a design applicant.

Priority: Enhancement

You currently list Microsoft Word and PowerPoint certification.

Those are worth including, but I would like to add at least some exposure to a design-specific platform over senior year.

You do not need ten software certifications.

I would rather see you learn one tool enough to produce something.

SketchUp could be an approachable place to begin. If Design Theory uses AutoCAD, Revit, Adobe software or another platform, we may instead build from what you are already seeing in the internship.

The goal is not to check a software box. The goal is to make you more prepared for studio-based design coursework.

Application Story

The biggest mistake we could make would be to write Chloe's application as:

4.0 student who likes interior design and is involved in several activities.

That would be accurate and completely forgettable.

There is a much more interesting person here.

You are someone who likes beautiful things but also likes figuring things out.

You enjoy fashion and interiors, but you are also interested in how a company succeeds.

You have worked retail and learned how differently people shop and communicate.

You have already moved into a professional design environment through your internship.

You chose not to accept a job opportunity when you realized you would not have enough time to do it well.

You learned that working with a difficult horse sometimes requires changing your own approach rather than replacing the horse.

And you said one of your core values is believing that you have to work for what you want rather than relying on someone else to create success for you.

That sounds like a future designer and entrepreneur.

That is the version of Chloe I want colleges to meet.

Essay Readiness

You actually gave me several potential essay directions without realizing it.

I would explore the horse story first. "Learning to connect with a horse instead of trying another" could become a story about observation, patience, adjustment, relationships and maturity—not an essay about horseback riding.

The second possibility is the job experience where something did not work, you were redirected, and you ultimately found a position that fit you better. That could show self-awareness and growth.

A third possibility is your relationship with being "busy." You said someone following you for a week would be surprised by how busy you have to stay. There may be something underneath that answer about energy, curiosity, work and how you engage with the world.

I would **not** write a generic "I have always loved interior design" essay unless we uncover a very specific story underneath it.

Recommendation Strategy

I want at least one recommender who can speak to your academic maturity and willingness to challenge yourself.

Your favorite class is History and your favorite teacher is Mrs. Livingston, so I would explore that relationship first rather than automatically choosing the teacher from the class where you earned the easiest A.

I also want to preserve your Design Theory supervisor as a potential supplemental recommendation where a college allows one. A professional designer who has actually watched you work could add something a classroom teacher cannot.

Financial and Scholarship Gap

This is the major area I cannot analyze yet because neither questionnaire tells me what your family considers an affordable college.

Before I call your school list complete, I need to know:

What your family is comfortable paying.

Whether merit scholarship money will significantly affect your decision.

Whether staying in Alabama has a financial advantage.

Whether you would consider an out-of-state school if scholarship money brought the cost down. Whether Auburn and Alabama are favorites because of program fit, campus fit, proximity, family tradition, or some combination of those.

We need a **financial safety** on this list just as much as we need an admissions safety.

Final Assessment

Chloe, I would not describe your application as needing to be "fixed." It needs to be **uncovered and organized**.

You already have the pieces.

The biggest opportunities are to clarify exactly which design profession you are pursuing, raise the ACT, document Design Theory, elevate equestrian experience, fully develop your work history, verify your awards, capture your homecoming contribution and begin creating a simple body of design work.

Once we do that, your application can communicate something very specific:

You are a strong student with creative instincts, people skills, practical work experience and an entrepreneurial streak who is already beginning to test a career in design rather than simply imagining one.

That is a much stronger starting position than the original questionnaire makes obvious.

A2 Achieve Priority Action Plan

DO NOW: Gather Design Theory internship details; send photographs of academic awards; document equestrian experience; obtain Hailos and Point Mallard dates/responsibilities; confirm weighted/unweighted GPA and senior schedule; register for another ACT; clarify Interior Design versus Interior Architecture.

DO NEXT: Build the full Working Resume; create Common App activity entries; identify recommenders; begin essay brainstorming; visit or speak directly with Interior Design programs at Auburn, Alabama and Mississippi State; begin saving design work.

ENHANCE IF TIME ALLOWS: Learn one design software platform; complete one independent design project; build a small process portfolio; add meaningful senior-year service or leadership only where it fits naturally.

MONITOR: ACT results, scholarship requirements, program progression requirements, application deadlines, family budget and whether your final college list contains academic, financial and program-fit options.