



A2 ACHIEVE STUDENT GAP ANALYSIS

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WHERE YOU STAND RIGHT NOW

The first thing I notice about your application is that your strongest story is much better than your GPA alone makes it look. On paper, you currently have a 3.3 weighted GPA and a 26 ACT superscore. We still do not have your unweighted GPA or enough transcript detail to understand your grade trend. You are not planning to retake the ACT. At the same time, you have deliberately chosen a senior schedule that includes AP Calculus AB, AP Government, AP Literature, an internship, and Advanced Organic Chemistry after already completing AP Chemistry and multiple health-science courses. That academic profile creates some risk at your more selective colleges and especially in competitive direct-entry pharmacy programs. But your application is not simply an academic-statistics application.

You have three unusually deep areas of involvement: healthcare preparation, equestrian life, and responsibility for other people. Those three pieces give us much more to work with than a collection of random school clubs would.

1. You have been riding since age five. During high school, you have trained across hunter/jumper, equitation, combined training, eventing, and show jumping; you estimate that riding, training, horse care, travel, and showing occupy roughly 30 hours per week in addition to three lessons in a typical week. You own a horse, perform substantial hands-on horse care, have helped train and condition horses, have helped younger riders, and are jumping around the one-meter level.
2. At the same time, you have intentionally built healthcare exposure through health-science coursework, HOSA, CNA preparation, a health internship, CPR training, and Community Health Worker preparation. You have now told me that you completed CNA training and passed the CNA examination, although we still need to verify your formal license/registry status and exact credential.
3. Then there is a third piece of your profile that I think you may be underestimating: children and caregiving. Your work in the First United Methodist Church nursery totals more than 500 hours, with approximately 80% occurring during high school. You served weekly with children ages two to four, sometimes in groups as large as 30, were trusted without a parent present, assisted with lessons and church programs, and received positive feedback from staff.

So the core issue is not that you need to “find more things to do.” You do not. Our job is to make sure the application accurately communicates the depth of what you have already done, while being realistic about the academic side of your college list.

YOUR STRONGEST ASSETS

Your strongest asset is **depth of commitment**. Thirty hours a week around horses over many years means something very different from joining an activity during junior year because it might look good on a college application. Riding has required physical work, emotional control, safety awareness, patience, money, time, travel, persistence, and responsibility for another living animal. The fact that you have experienced falls, fear, confidence challenges, and mental blocks matters too. That gives us a much richer understanding of what riding has required from you than “equestrian athlete” communicates on its own.

Your second major asset is **the amount of healthcare preparation you have already pursued before college**. You are not simply checking “pharmacy” on an application without having explored healthcare. Your course selection, HOSA participation, CNA work, Community Health Worker preparation, internship, CPR training, and upcoming hospital exposure collectively tell an admissions reader that healthcare has been a sustained interest rather than a last-minute major choice.

Your third strength is **responsibility without needing a title**. Formal leadership is not the strongest part of your résumé, but leadership is still present. Teaching younger riders, supervising children around horses, serving as a Pine Ridge trainer/camp counselor, independently caring for children, taking responsibility for your own horse, and being trusted with young children at church all involve leadership. Your activity plan already recognizes the Pine Ridge role as one that involved teaching children riding and horse-care skills while reinforcing safety and responsibility.

That is the kind of leadership I want us to emphasize: not invented leadership and not inflated titles, but evidence that people trusted you with responsibility.

THE BIGGEST ACADEMIC GAP

The single most important missing academic fact is your **unweighted GPA and actual transcript pattern**. We know 3.3 is weighted. That means I cannot responsibly compare your GPA with colleges reporting unweighted numbers. We also need to know whether your record is relatively steady, whether there has been an upward trend, and (especially for pharmacy) how you have performed in chemistry, biology, math, and your health-science courses.

Your senior-year rigor is a strength. AP Calculus, Advanced Organic Chemistry, AP Literature, AP Government, debate, and your healthcare internship tell colleges that you are not backing away from challenge during senior year. Now those classes need to work for you.

Strong first-semester grades, particularly in math and science, could materially strengthen the academic story. Weak senior grades would do the opposite. At this point, adding another activity is much less important than performing well in the classes you already chose.

TESTING

Your ACT superscore is 26, with English 29, Math 25, Reading 24, and Science 28. I do not think retesting needs to become the center of your senior year simply because a higher number would always be nice. At a test-optional school where your 26 does not improve your academic position, we can choose not to submit it. At a school where it is reasonably competitive or needed for a

scholarship, we can use it. The important distinction is that we need a **school-by-school testing strategy**, not one blanket rule.

If you suddenly decided that UNC-Chapel Hill or another highly selective university was your absolute priority, then a higher ACT could have more strategic value. But with the application work, strong senior grades, your internship, and pharmacy exploration still in front of you, I would not automatically divert substantial time into another ACT attempt unless we determine that it would materially change an outcome.

THE COLLEGE-LIST GAP

This is one of the most important areas we need to fix. Right now your serious list consists of High Point, UNC-Chapel Hill, the University of Rhode Island, and the University of Delaware. You prefer a 0–6 or similarly streamlined PharmD route, although you are flexible. You also want an East Coast or coastal environment, generally four to twelve hours from Huntsville, and access to an appropriate hunter/jumper or eventing barn within about 45 minutes is extremely important because you intend to bring your own horse.

Those requirements make your college search more complicated than a normal “find schools with pharmacy” search. The four schools on your list do not offer the same pharmacy pathway.

High Point offers a six-year structure consisting of two undergraduate pre-pharmacy years followed by the four-year PharmD, with an Early Assurance pathway for eligible HPU pre-pharmacy students. It is not simply unconditional admission from high school all the way through the PharmD. Students in Early Assurance must complete the required HPU coursework, maintain a 3.0 cumulative HPU GPA with no grade below C–, participate in the Pre-Pharmacy Club, and later submit PharmCAS.

Rhode Island is actually the clearest match to your stated academic preference: URI identifies its PharmD as a true direct-entry 0–6 program for high-school applicants. It is also competitive, and progression still requires successful undergraduate performance and a later interview.

UNC-Chapel Hill is a completely different pathway. UNC's PharmD requires at least 60 hours of prerequisite undergraduate work and then a separate professional-school admission process. It is not a direct-entry 0–6 PharmD from high school.

At Delaware, current undergraduate information describes programs such as Nutrition and Medical Sciences as preparation for a later PharmD program. In other words, Delaware can prepare you for pharmacy school, but it is not the same kind of direct PharmD pathway you say you prefer.

This means we do not yet have a balanced list. You currently have one strong early-assurance possibility, one competitive true 0–6 program, one extremely selective university that does not provide your preferred pharmacy structure, and one traditional pre-professional route. We still need at least one or two colleges that you would genuinely attend where the academic risk is lower, pharmacy preparation is strong, finances are workable, and horse logistics are realistic. That is not about adding “safety schools” you do not like. A school is useless as a safety if you would never attend it.

YOUR MAJOR AND CAREER GAP

Pharmacy makes sense based on what you have done so far. But there is one major problem: **you have not yet told me why**. On your follow-up questionnaire, you confirmed that pharmacy remains your primary field and identified compounding as the type of pharmacy that currently interests you. But the questions asking why pharmacy appeals to you and what experience influenced that interest are still unanswered.

That is not a résumé gap. It is a thinking gap we need to close before we write application content. You do not need a dramatic childhood story. You do need to understand what you are actually drawn to. Is it medication science? Precision? Working one-on-one with patients? The problem-solving involved in compounding? Being able to make a treatment usable for a patient who cannot use a standard formulation? Working in an independent pharmacy environment? The intersection between chemistry and practical care?

We need your answer, not an answer that sounds impressive. Because you specifically named compounding, I would like you to get exposure to an actual pharmacist who compounds medications if possible. One thoughtful shadowing experience or conversation could be more useful to you right now than joining three more clubs. The goal is not to add another résumé line. It is to find out whether the work you imagine is the work you actually want.

THE HEALTHCARE INFORMATION GAP

There is good material here, but portions of it are still too vague to use confidently. You have completed CNA training and passed the examination, but we need the exact credentialing organization and confirmation of whether you are officially active on the appropriate registry or otherwise formally certified. Your Community Health Worker credential also needs its official title, date, training organization, and status. Your health internship needs the correct program name, exact structure, hours, and (once spring rotations occur) specific clinical settings and responsibilities.

These are not small administrative details. They change how strongly we can describe the experience. For example, “participated in CNA training” and “earned CNA certification” are not interchangeable. We will use the strongest language that is completely accurate.

ACTIVITIES: WHAT WE ARE NOT USING WELL ENOUGH

I would reconsider the original order of your Common App activities now that I have your follow-up answers. Your original plan correctly put equestrian involvement and healthcare preparation at the top and emphasized that activity order should reflect meaning, commitment, responsibility, leadership, and impact, not simply connection to your intended major.

But the updated information makes your church nursery service stronger than we initially knew. Approximately 400 of your 500+ cumulative hours appear to have occurred during high school if your 80% estimate is accurate. That is significant, sustained service involving real responsibility for young children. I would likely move that activity higher.

I would also be careful about making IEA a centerpiece. Your prior IEA participation is legitimate and can absolutely be included, but you are no longer participating and you have indicated that you do not want renewed interaction with your former coach. We do not need to create a problem where none exists. We can accurately describe what you did without relying on that relationship for recommendations, verification, or your primary application story.

HONORS

Your honors section is currently thin. Freshman Honor Roll is a valid high-school recognition. National Junior Honor Society was eighth grade only, so I would not use it as a high-school Common App honor. You also told me that there are no additional academic, service, leadership, or subject-specific awards currently missing.

I do **not** want to manufacture an honors section to compensate. Your application is based more on sustained activity and responsibility than awards, and that is okay. We can determine whether successful CNA credentialing, selective internship admission, or another legitimate high-school recognition belongs somewhere in the application, but a credential should not be mislabeled as an award simply because we have space.

YOUR APPLICATION STORY

The application should not try to turn you into “the future pharmacist” in every section. What I want the reader to understand is broader: You are someone who has repeatedly chosen environments where another person or animal depends on you to pay attention.

That appears in horse care. It appears when you are teaching a nervous young rider. It appears in a nursery full of toddlers. It appears in CNA training. It appears in scuba safety. And it is relevant to healthcare without us having to force every experience into a pharmacy theme.

A second theme is persistence. Riding gives us actual evidence of fear, setbacks, falls, mental blocks, rebuilding confidence, and continuing anyway. That may eventually give us strong essay material.

A third theme is hands-on learning. Your application suggests that you learn a great deal by doing: riding, caring for horses, working with children, healthcare training, clinical preparation, and scuba. That will matter when we evaluate college environments.

ESSAY READINESS

You have several possible directions, but I do not want to choose the essay before we hear more of your thinking. The mental side of riding deserves exploration. “I ride horses” is not an essay. A specific moment when fear changed the way you rode, trusted a horse, responded to a setback, or learned to operate despite uncertainty could be. Teaching or caring for younger children could also uncover something that is not obvious elsewhere in the application. Your horse itself might provide a story if there is a particular relationship, failure, decision, or turning point that reveals something about you.

Pharmacy does not need to be your Common App essay. In fact, your application may be stronger if the personal essay shows us who you are and the school-specific writing explains why pharmacy.

RECOMMENDATION STRATEGY

For your academic recommendation, I want someone who can speak specifically about how you handle challenging work, not simply someone whose class gave you the highest grade. A chemistry, advanced science, health-science, or other rigorous-course teacher could be particularly valuable if that person knows your work habits and can discuss persistence, curiosity, improvement, or preparation for health sciences.

Your former IEA relationship does not need to be part of this strategy. If a college allows an additional recommendation and we later have a reason to use one, an adult who has directly observed your responsibility with children, horses, or healthcare could potentially add something different. We would only do that if the college welcomes additional material.

FINANCIAL FIT IS STILL AN INFORMATION GAP

We have not yet incorporated what your family considers affordable. That matters with every student, but it matters even more for you because we are evaluating the cost of both undergraduate/pre-pharmacy education **and** a professional PharmD program. You also intend to bring a horse, which means boarding, transportation, veterinary/farrier costs, lessons, show expenses, and commuting to a barn may be part of the real college budget. A school can be academically perfect and financially unrealistic. Before Early Decision enters the conversation anywhere, we need the complete financial picture.

WHAT I WOULD NOT WORRY ABOUT

I would not worry about trying to add more clubs. I would not worry that you do not have five impressive leadership titles. I would not worry about turning every hobby into a pharmacy connection. And I would not worry about the fact that IEA is no longer part of your senior year. You have more than enough ongoing equestrian involvement to establish that riding remains a major part of your life. The bigger risks are academics, college-list balance, program-pathway understanding, and making sure the experiences you already have are communicated accurately.

DO NOW

Get your official transcript information so we can determine your unweighted GPA, course grades, and academic trend. Confirm the exact CNA credential and registry/license status. Confirm the official Community Health Worker credential. Complete the unanswered questions about why you want pharmacy and why compounding specifically interests you. Finalize the hours, dates, and responsibilities for the activities that will actually appear on your Common App.

At the same time, treat senior grades as a major application priority. Your current schedule gives you an opportunity to show colleges that you can succeed in rigorous science and quantitative coursework.

DO NEXT

Research each pharmacy pathway as a separate admissions process rather than assuming all four colleges lead to the PharmD the same way. High Point and Rhode Island deserve the most immediate program-specific attention because they most closely match your desire for a streamlined pharmacy route.

For High Point, I would plan around Early Action on November 15, 2026 rather than automatically committing through binding Early Decision. HPU says Early Action is nonbinding and receives priority scholarship consideration. That gives you time to compare pharmacy structure, financial aid, and (very importantly) horse and barn logistics before you are committed.

We also need to expand the college list enough that you have at least one academically and financially realistic option that still satisfies the parts of college life you care about.

ENHANCE IF TIME ALLOWS

Arrange a conversation or shadowing opportunity with a pharmacist, ideally someone who works in compounding or an independent/community setting. Go into that experience with career questions rather than résumé questions.

If your Huntsville Hospital internship allows any exposure to pharmacy operations, ask whether a pharmacy rotation or observation is possible.

Also document the impact of the activities you already have. We need accurate numbers and responsibilities from the church nursery, Pine Ridge, horse care, babysitting, healthcare training, and other activities, not new activities created simply because college applications exist.

MONITOR

Monitor your senior science and math grades, the details that emerge from your spring healthcare internship, changing pharmacy-program requirements, scholarship deadlines, and the actual feasibility of boarding your horse near each campus. Most importantly, monitor whether pharmacy continues to feel right as you get closer to the real work.

You do not need to prove at seventeen that you know exactly what you will do for the rest of your life. You do need to choose colleges that give you a strong path toward the career you currently want without trapping you if your interests evolve.