



A2 ACHIEVE SCHOOL SUGGESTION FOR CHLOE KNIGHTEN

My first recommendation is that we **do not build your college list around school name alone.**

For you, the order should be:

Program first.

Program progression requirements second.

Campus/social fit third.

Affordability fourth.

You say you want college both for an education and to meet people, and that the social environment is one of the things you are most excited about. So, I absolutely want the traditional college experience represented. But you are entering a specialized profession, and I would rather put you at a school with the right professional degree than a school that offers only a loosely related design major.

1. Auburn University

PRIORITY SCHOOL — REACH/TARGET RIGHT NOW

Why I like it for you: Auburn's four-year B.S. Interior Design program is CIDA accredited, includes professional design preparation, and requires a professionally supervised internship. Your existing interest in Auburn and current Design Theory internship make this an obvious school to investigate deeply.

But you need to understand the progression requirement before falling in love with the program. Freshmen enter **Pre-Interior Design**, and admission into the sophomore-through-senior Interior Design program happens after portfolio review. Auburn currently says approximately the top 55–60 students advance.

There is also a current professional program fee of \$2,355 per semester for Interior Design/Pre-Interior Design students, and Auburn says that fee is not covered by university-level scholarships. That needs to be included in our financial comparison.

Auburn's Fall 2027 applicants are required to submit standardized test scores. Your 4.0 is a major strength, but your current 24 ACT makes Auburn a school where another ACT attempt is strategically important. Auburn's Fall 2025 Alabama-resident middle 50% was 25–31 ACT with a GPA range of 3.87–4.33. (

A2 take: Keep Auburn high on the list, but go into it with eyes wide open. Getting into Auburn is only the first gate; progressing into Interior Design after freshman year is another.

2. The University of Alabama

STRONG TARGET AND POSSIBLY AN UNDERRATED FIT

I would not treat Alabama as merely your Auburn backup.

UA has a legitimate professional Interior Design program accredited by both CIDA and NASAD. The curriculum includes residential design, commercial design, hospitality interiors, special populations, construction procedures, lighting, professional practice and AutoCAD.

That actually lines up very nicely with your combination of interiors, boutique/retail interests, people skills and entrepreneurial goals.

For 2027 entry, UA only requires an ACT/SAT score for applicants whose cumulative GPA is below 3.0, giving you more flexibility with your current testing profile.

A2 take: This one deserves a real program visit, not just a general campus tour. I would want you inside the department, looking at student work and talking to Interior Design faculty and students before you decide Auburn is automatically the better design school for you.

3. Mississippi State University

STRONG TARGET / EXCELLENT PROGRAM ALTERNATIVE

Mississippi State is the first school I would add that you did **not** initially name.

Its Interior Design program is CIDA- and NASAD-accredited and sits within the College of Architecture, Art and Design. The curriculum includes studio work, lighting, materials, construction, codes, space planning, furniture design and professional practice.

I especially like MSU for you because the program includes a required three-month internship. That type of practical experience fits the student we are already seeing through your jobs and Design Theory internship.

There is a progression requirement here too: students complete a portfolio review between the second and third years and must meet GPA requirements to move forward. MSU itself describes Interior Design admission as highly competitive.

University admission is considerably more attainable with your reported academic profile than some of the stretch options on this list; MSU currently lists a 2.50 GPA threshold for nonresident applicants, with testing requirements depending on GPA.

A2 take: I would absolutely apply. This gives us a true professional design program, SEC/traditional college environment and a very different admissions-risk profile from Auburn.

4. University of Tennessee, Knoxville **REACH — BUT VERY IMPORTANT TO EXPLORE**

This one is on the list for a specific reason.

If you really mean **Interior Architecture**, Tennessee may be closer to what you think you are asking for.

UT offers a four-year CIDA-accredited **Bachelor of Science in Interior Architecture**. Students work in studio environments with visualization, materials, technology, model-making, furniture and digital fabrication.

It is also a much more ambitious admissions play with your current ACT. UT's Fall 2026 out-of-state admitted students had a mid-50% ACT range of 29–33 and a UT Core weighted GPA range of 4.17–4.53.

For Fall 2027, UT requires test scores, and its Early Action application deadline is November 1 with materials due November 15.

A2 take: With a 24, this is a reach. With a significantly improved ACT, it becomes a much more interesting conversation. I would keep it on the list because it helps you compare **Interior Architecture** with **Interior Design** in a concrete way.

5. Florida State University **EXPANDED REACH**

FSU has a CIDA- and NASAD-accredited B.S. in Interior Design with work in residential and commercial environments including retail, workplace, hospitality and specialized populations. All Interior Design students complete an internship.

The major is highly competitive and uses a first-year review. Current FSU materials indicate that only roughly 30–36 students are selected to progress from the first-year foundation sequence.

A2 take: This is not a necessary application, but I like it as a creative stretch option if you want a larger Southern university experience outside Alabama.

6. Georgia Southern University **LOWER-RISK OPTION WORTH INVESTIGATING**

Georgia Southern offers a CIDA-accredited B.S. in Interior Design/Interior Architecture and Design with six design studios, Revit and other technical coursework, professional business practices and a required internship.

I like having at least one additional school where the **program itself** is legitimate and professionally accredited rather than selecting a random admissions safety that does not really serve your career goal.

A2 take: This would be an expanded-list option, particularly if financial aid or admissions results make us want another professional design program in the Southeast.

MY INITIAL CHLOE LIST

If we were beginning applications today, I would start with:

CORE LIST

Auburn University
University of Alabama
Mississippi State University
University of Tennessee Knoxville

EXPANDED LIST

Florida State University
Georgia Southern University

And I would **not add more schools yet.**

First, I want to answer Interior Design versus Interior Architecture, get the ACT moving, establish the family budget and have you experience the actual design departments at Auburn and Alabama.

After that, I can build a much more precise **Reach / Match / Safety + Financial Safety school matrix for you**, including admission likelihood, design-program admission structure, CIDA accreditation, portfolio requirements, scholarship strategy, application deadlines and the specific reason each school earns a place on your list.