Wren Ashby - Common App and Dartmouth supplement (2026-27, Regular Decision)

Duluth, MN · wren.ashby.test@example.com · Applying to: Dartmouth College undergraduate admission, 2026-27

This is a fictional applicant, written for this sample.

Profile

- Lester River High School, Duluth, Minnesota (public, ~1,400 students). Class of 2027.
- Lives with her mother (dental hygienist), her father (USPS letter carrier) and her brother (13).
- Intended areas of study: Earth Sciences; Environmental Studies.

Grades and tests

- GPA 3.81 unweighted, 4.18 weighted. Class rank not reported.
- Senior courses: AP Calculus AB, AP Environmental Science, AP English Literature, Spanish 4, and Introductory Geology (College in the Schools, through the University of Minnesota Duluth).
- Earlier APs: AP English Language (5), AP Physics 1 (4), AP US History (4), AP Chemistry (3).
- SAT 1450 (Evidence-Based Reading and Writing 740, Math 710).

Activities

1. **Founder, St. Louis Bay Ice Log** (grades 10-12, 5 hrs/wk, 16 wks/yr). Measures ice thickness at 9 fixed points every Sunday from December to March and posts the results on a local fishing forum. 41 measurement days over three winters, now about 600 readers. Built two Arduino temperature strings for $38 each; lost the first one through the ice in March 2025.
2. **Prep cook and counter, Harbor Light Bakery** (grades 10-12, 14 hrs/wk, paid). Saturday shift starts at 4:30 a.m. Laminates croissant dough. Has been trusted to open the store alone since June 2025.
3. **Nordic ski team, varsity** (grades 9-12, 12 hrs/wk in winter). Wax technician for the 34-skier team. Placed 6th in the 2026 section relay.
4. **Volunteer naturalist, Amity Ridge Nature Center** (grades 10-12, 3 hrs/wk). Leads snowshoe walks for second-graders; about 25 field trips so far.
5. **Science Olympiad** (grades 10-12). Competes in Dynamic Planet (glaciers and lakes); 3rd place at regionals in 2026.
6. **Field volunteer, Arrowhead Lakes Monitoring Collaborative** (summer 2026, 25 hrs/wk, 6 weeks). Took Secchi-disk clarity readings and water samples on 14 inland lakes. Noticed that one lake had been logged under the wrong ID number since 2022.
7. **Family responsibilities** (grades 10-12, 6 hrs/wk). Drives her brother to hockey practice four days a week.

8. **Boundary Waters canoe trips** (grades 8-12). Five trips with her father. Planned the 62-mile route for the 2025 trip, including the portages.

Honors

- AP Scholar with Honor (2026)
- Science Olympiad regional 3rd place, Dynamic Planet (2026)
- Varsity letter, Nordic skiing (2025, 2026)
- Honorable mention, Northeast Minnesota Regional Science Fair, for the ice-log project (2025)

Additional information

I earned a C+ in the first semester of AP Chemistry. I had been memorizing equilibrium problems without understanding them. I started going to my teacher's 7 a.m. help sessions twice a week and redid every missed test question by hand. I finished the second semester with a B+, and I still use the habit of redoing my mistakes.

Personal essay (prompt: a topic so engaging you lose track of time)

The first time I heard Lake Superior's ice make noise, I was eleven and sure we were going to die. My uncle Pete had taken me onto St. Louis Bay to fish for perch. Somewhere under our feet came a sound like a giant plucking a wire fence: a long, falling twang that rolled away toward Wisconsin. Pete didn't look up from his auger. "It's just talking," he said. "Means it's cold."

I didn't believe him, so I asked how thick the ice was. He guessed. The man in the next shack guessed too, and his number was four inches different. That bothered me for about three years.

In tenth grade I borrowed Pete's auger and a tape measure and started writing numbers down. Every Sunday from December to March, I walked the same nine spots between the Rice's Point launch and the old ore dock. I drilled, measured and posted a table on a local fishing forum. The first winter almost no one read it. By the third, about six hundred people did. Some of them argued with me in the comments, which taught me to record where I drilled, not just what I found.

Measuring once a week couldn't explain anything, so I built a temperature string for $38: eight sensors on a cable, an Arduino, and a battery pack sealed in a pickle jar. I froze it into the ice in January 2025. In March, a warm southwest wind opened a lead I hadn't predicted, and the whole string went into the bay. I had seven weeks of data and nothing to retrieve.

I was more upset than I let on. But the seven weeks showed something I didn't expect. The ice grew fastest not on the coldest nights but on clear, still nights after the wind had blown the snow off. Snow insulates. Pete was right that the noise meant cold, but nobody had told either of us that the snow mattered more. I built a second string and tied it to a shore post with a hundred feet of line. It is still mine.

The message I'm proudest of came last February from a man named Gary. He said he'd stayed off the east side of the bay because my log showed only four inches there. The next week, two snowmobiles

went through near that spot. Nobody was hurt. I don't take credit for Gary's good sense, but I understood then that writing numbers down is a way of looking after people.

I want to know why ice does what it does: why it sings, and why it fails where it does. I'm still an amateur with an auger. I'd like to stop being one.

Dartmouth supplement

Why is Dartmouth a good fit for you? Which aspects of the College's academic program, community, or campus environment attract your interest? (100 words)

I want to study Earth Sciences somewhere the ground freezes. Dartmouth's Institute of Arctic Studies and the Earth Sciences Stretch, a term of field geology across the West, would turn my Sunday measurements into real training. The D-Plan matters too: an off-term could put me back on a Minnesota lake, or in Greenland with a faculty project. I also want the Dartmouth Outing Club and a First-Year Trip, because the people I trust most are the ones I've carried a canoe with. Hanover is small and cold. To me, that's a recommendation.

There is a Quaker saying: "Let your life speak." Describe the environment in which you were raised and the impact it has had on the person you are today. (250 words)

My house runs on early alarms. My dad leaves at 6:15 to sort mail before his route through Lakeside, which he has walked in every kind of weather for nineteen years. My mom cleans teeth four days a week and keeps the family calendar on the fridge in three colors of pen. On Saturdays I'm the first one up: my shift at Harbor Light Bakery starts at 4:30, when Superior Street is dark and the only other lights belong to the snowplows.

Nobody in my family gives speeches. They show up. My dad has never missed a ski race, even the one at minus eighteen. My mom drove a neighbor to chemotherapy every Tuesday for a winter and never mentioned it at dinner. I learned from them that being reliable is a kind of kindness, and that it mostly goes unnoticed.

That has shaped me in good ways and in less good ones. I'm the person who quietly takes on the job nobody wants. On the ski team, I learned to wax 34 pairs of skis because our coach couldn't do it alone, and I like being useful in the background. But I'm slow to ask for help. My chemistry grade in eleventh grade is the evidence. It took a C+ to get me into my teacher's room at 7 a.m.

Duluth also gave me the lake, which is huge, cold and indifferent, and which makes you pay attention. I want my life to speak the way my parents' does: steady, useful, and paying attention.