CHOOSING THE RIGHT UNIVERSITY FOR YOU

HFSV Bridge to STEM | 2026

ONEDEGREEHOTTER.COM



ALEJANDRA ACOSTA

CEO & FOUNDER

I founded One Degree Hotter to help people confidently navigate the college application process.

I've been a college advisor, admissions reader, and higher education expert for a decade.

Now my mission is to help you achieve your dreams.


Exercise:
Visualize
your college
experience
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1

DEBUNKING “BEST” COLLEGES





2

HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT COLLEGE FOR YOU

3

EXERCISE: YOUR COLLEGE PRIORITIES





4

CREATING A COLLEGE LIST



1 The Myth of “Best” Colleges



What makes a college “the best”?

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HISTORY OF COLLEGE RANKINGS



- College rankings have existed since the early 1900's
- College rankings as we know them emerged in the 1980's
- U.S. News & World Report popularized rankings

WHAT GOES INTO COLLEGE RANKINGS?

Graduation rates	**16%**
First-year retention rates	5%
Graduation rate performance	**10%**
Pell graduation rates	5.5%
Pell graduation performance	5.5%
College grads earning more than a high school grad	5%
Borrower debt	5%
Peer assessment	**20%**
Financial resources per student	8%
Faculty salaries	
Full-time faculty	6%
Student-faculty ratio	2%
Standardized tests	3%
Citations per publication	5%
Field-Weighted Citation Impact	1.25%

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WHY DO RANKINGS MATTER TO COLLEGES?

Higher rankings

Greater visibility & perceived prestige



More security ($$$)

More applicants

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The best college is the college that is best for

YOU

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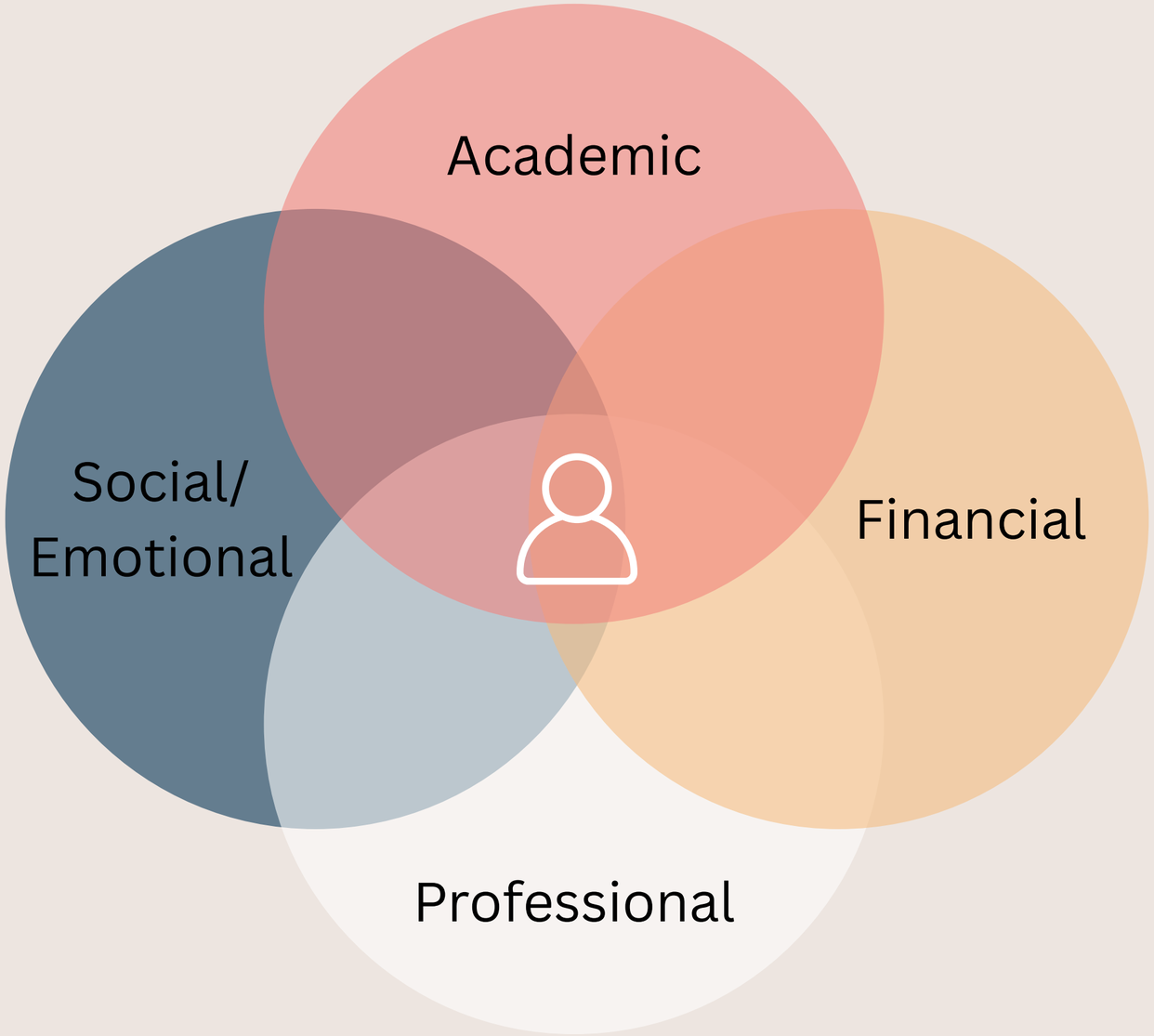
2 How to Pick the Right College for YOU

FACTORS TO CONSIDER



- Major
- Location
- Size
- Culture
- Cost
- Activities
- Resources
- Network
- Community

A FRAMEWORK FOR COLLEGE DECISIONS



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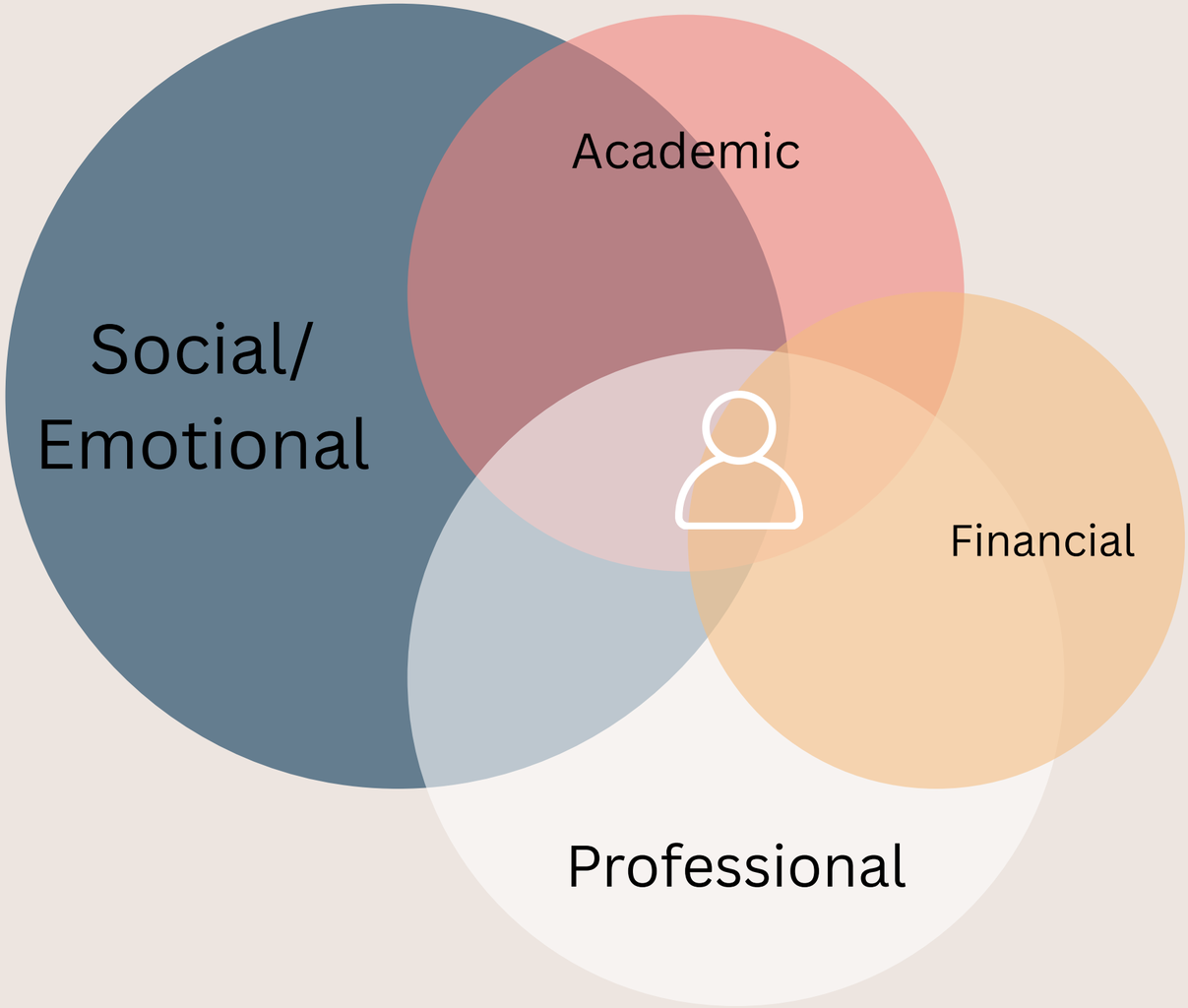

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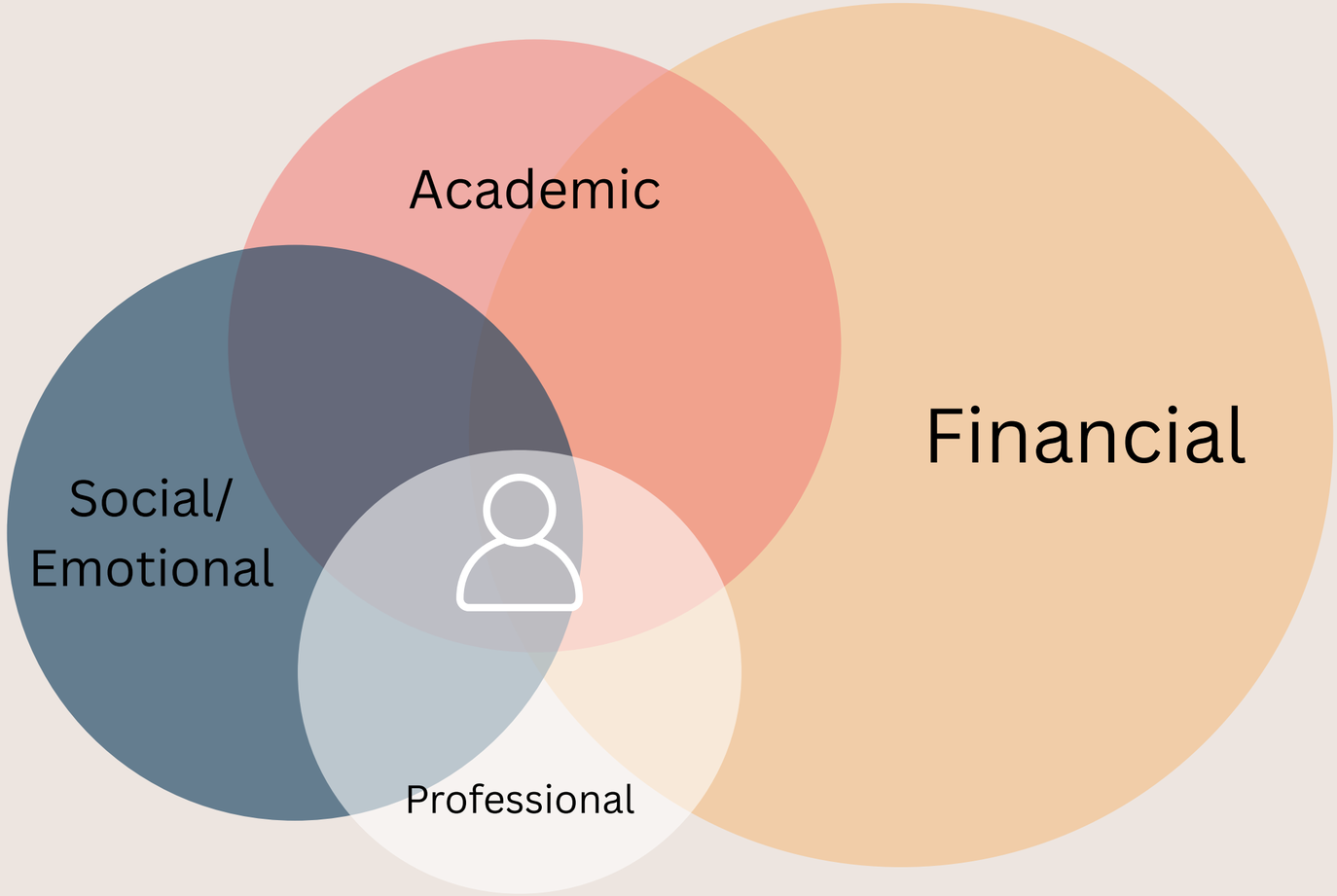

A NOTE ON FINANCIAL FACTORS



- Depends on:
  - Financial capacity to pay
  - Risk/debt tolerance
  - Other financial or life goals

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3

Exercise: Your College Priorities



WRITE YOUR COLLEGE PRIORITIES

4

Creating a college list



DEVELOPING A COLLEGE LIST



- At least one school of each category: safety, target and reach
- Rule of thumb: 6-12 schools

HOW TO CONDUCT YOUR RESEARCH



- Platforms: Niche, Edvisorly, Kollegio, etc.
- Social Media
- College Scorecard
- Visiting

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LET'S CREATE OUR COLLEGE LIST!

WANT MORE HELP?



I offer college advising and essay writing support to help you meet your goals.

Let’s work together to help you get one degree hotter!

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ONE DEGREE HOTTER COLLEGE ADVISING



THANK YOU!

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