



AIEA SIO PATHWAYS

2023

Sherif Barsoum

Senior Associate Vice President of Global Services
New York University





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Time in role: 7.5 years

Sherif Barsoum has been in the field of international education for more than thirty years. He is the Senior Associate Vice President for Global Services at New York University. Previously, he served as the Director of International Student and Scholar Services at Vanderbilt University for eight years and was assistant director at the International Office at Ohio State University for thirteen years. He is an adjunct faculty at the Steinhardt International Education Program in the College of Education at NYU and teaches master's degree students. Originally from Cairo (Egypt), Barsoum received his BA in political science and a master's in higher education administration from the Ohio State University. Barsoum regularly conducts training in intercultural programming and has served on the NAFSA, CEA, and AIEA boards. He is a passionate advocate for study abroad and international exchange and has led students on short-term programs to Egypt, Morocco, and southern Africa.

About New York University

New York University (NYU) is a prestigious private research university with degree-granting campuses in New York, Abu Dhabi (the United Arab Emirates), and Shanghai (China) in addition to twelve global academic centers spanning five continents. Known for its urban New York campus, its emphasis on research and innovation, and its strong commitment to diversity and inclusion, NYU offers a diverse range of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs with globally recognized faculty and a vibrant student body from around the world.





Describe your current role as a senior international officer (SIO). How would you describe your institution? What areas are you responsible for?

NYU is a global institution. The Office of Global Services, which I lead, has four facets: International Student Services, International Scholar Services, Outbound Immigration and Mobility Services for students and faculty, and Programming to support international student and scholar success and integration between domestic and international students.

Tell us about your career path. What were some of the critical events/decisions that led you to your current position?

Starting out at a large public university like Ohio State was beneficial because I was exposed to many different situations in international education. I also had the opportunity to not only be an international student advisor but also to lead short-term study abroad programs and recruit students from abroad. This all really paved the way for success in my current position given my experience in international student advising, international admissions, and education abroad.

What strengths do your identities bring to the position?

Flexibility is a must for effective leadership. The fact that I'm an immigrant also helps me to further connect with international students, scholars, and other people of color. Speaking three languages widens my appreciation of perspectives different from my own.

What advice would you give to aspiring SIOs in terms of knowledge, skills, and experience? Would this advice vary based on a person's identities?

I would say don't let opportunities go by. Say "Yes" even if it's going to be more work or take you off your usual path. You never know what may come from these different opportunities. Say "Yes" and try it. If a program that you're trying fails, it's a good learning experience. There's no failing; it's all a learning experience. Make personal connections with different kinds of people, from the janitor all the way up to the president.





● What would you do differently if you were just beginning your career in international education?

I would probably have finished my doctoral program. I finished all my course work but was all but dissertation (ABD). In retrospect, I may have benefitted from moving a bit earlier from my first position to get a higher position because I was at Ohio State for thirteen years. Overall, I have no regrets.

● How does your work as SIO intersect and align with your institution's mission and initiatives? Is there intersection with your institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion work?

Everything at NYU is global, so it is easy to work in a place that recognizes and appreciates internationalization. Further, everything we do is through a diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging lens. For example, in our office, we created a series of programs supporting anti-racism education for international students with the goal to improve access to the complex conversations about race and racism in the U.S. and to provide a foundational understanding of the U.S.-specific context that considers our students' diverse backgrounds. Another example is with the alternative spring break trips that we take students on. We take international and domestic students to non-traditional sites like Costa Rica, Morocco, and South Africa to further widen their perspectives.

● What strategic issues do you think SIOs should prioritize at this time?

Connecting with faculty and administration to ensure internationalization is prominent on each campus should certainly be prioritized. Advocacy is another top priority. NYU believes in global engagement, global education, and the importance of letting its students pursue their studies and their dreams irrespective of where they are from. NYU will continue its advocacy efforts on behalf of its international students and scholars.

● What has been your favorite international experience so far?

Taking students to the continent of Africa, from north to south, is by far my greatest pleasure. Challenging, mentoring, and supporting staff to become exceptional international educators is also a passion of mine.

● Why does internationalization matter? To you, to your institution, to your country, to the world?

Simply put, international education brings forth world peace.

