

جامعة نيويورك أبوظبي



NYU ABU DHABI

Leadership Profile: Chief Financial Officer

New York University Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi, UAE

THE SEARCH

New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD), a distinctive institution in global higher education, seeks a sophisticated, strategic, and innovative financial leader to serve as its next Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Since welcoming its first students in 2010, NYUAD has become one of the most selective and dynamic institutions in the world, combining the academic rigor of a leading American research university with the ambition and forward-looking vision of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). From its inception, NYUAD has attracted exceptional students in pursuit of its ambition to be the “World’s Honors College,” while evolving into a center for graduate education, research, and innovation. Situated on a purpose-built 40-acre campus in Abu Dhabi’s attractive cultural district on Saadiyat Island, NYUAD serves as a key driver of discovery, education, and economic development in the region and an integral part of New York University’s global network.

Within this context, the CFO serves as the University’s senior executive responsible for ensuring financial sustainability, operational effectiveness, and alignment of business and financial resources with NYUAD’s academic mission. Reporting to the Chief Operating Officer (COO), the CFO leads a team of 46 professionals, including six direct reports, and provides strategic oversight of financial planning and analysis, budgeting, accounting and reporting, treasury and investments, procurement, risk management, and business partnerships. As a member of the University leadership team, the CFO advises the Vice Chancellor, Provost, and COO, shaping fiscal strategy, strengthening financial infrastructure, and enabling informed, data-driven decision-making.

NYU Abu Dhabi brings together a liberal arts education and a growing research enterprise within a diverse, global community. With more than 2,500 undergraduate and graduate students representing over 120 countries, 400 faculty, and a curriculum grounded in global intellectual traditions, NYUAD leverages the range of perspectives on campus to address complex challenges. The CFO will support this mission by

promoting transparency and accountability in financial operations and strengthening the systems and processes that underpin academic and administrative excellence.

The Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the broader UAE have made foundational investments in world-class science, technology, and the knowledge economy. NYUAD also plays a leading role in advancing research and innovation across disciplines—from artificial intelligence and neuroscience to the arts and humanities. As the UAE builds leadership in fields such as AI, quantum science, renewable energy, biotechnology, and fintech, NYUAD is positioned to make a leading contribution to the national agenda. The CFO will help align financial planning with these priorities, overseeing multi-year budgeting and capital planning while partnering with [Tamkeen](#), the Abu Dhabi Government partner, to steward and optimize the University's funding model.

As the first international research university established in the UAE, NYUAD plays a distinctive convening role, building a network of national and international institutions within a growing academic ecosystem. Through NYU's Global Network University—including campuses in New York and Shanghai and academic centers worldwide—NYUAD is part of a highly connected institution. The CFO will represent NYUAD in financial matters with NYU New York, NYU's Abu Dhabi Government partner, and external stakeholders, ensuring alignment with global standards and partnership agreements.

Established in partnership with the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and working closely with it as its primary government funding partner, NYUAD has built a strong undergraduate foundation while expanding into graduate and executive education. Recent developments include the launch of NYU Stern's MBA and EMBA programs in the MENA region. The University operates with generous funding from its Abu Dhabi Government partner and also generates income from other sources such as philanthropy, external research grants, executive and professional education, retail and F&B operations and other commercial enterprise operations. As the University continues to grow, the CFO will play a critical role in stewarding resources, managing capital and liquidity, strengthening enterprise risk management, and advancing operational efficiency through modernized systems and processes.

This is a defining moment for NYUAD and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The CFO will guide and strengthen the University's financial framework through its next phase of growth, ensuring fiscal stability, operational efficiency, and alignment with NYU's global governance. The CFO will shape financial and business policy to support long-term sustainability, institutional development, and alignment with national priorities.

New York University Abu Dhabi has engaged the executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in the recruitment of the Chief Financial Officer. All inquiries, applications, and nominations, which will remain confidential, should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

Founding and Mission

NYUAD was inaugurated through a visionary partnership between NYU and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Announced in October 2007, this collaboration marked the first time a major U.S. research university established a full-fledged, degree-granting liberal arts and sciences campus abroad. In September 2010,

NYUAD welcomed its inaugural class of 148 undergraduate students into degree programs in the arts, sciences, and engineering, as well as a liberal core curriculum. Over time, NYUAD has expanded its academic offerings with master's, PhD, postdoctoral, and executive education programs.

From inception, NYUAD's mission has been to welcome and educate global citizens and to produce knowledge that promotes human understanding and the betterment of society. Through distinctive undergraduate and graduate programs, NYUAD enables students and graduates to achieve intellectual, personal, and professional fulfillment. Through cutting-edge research and a commitment to academic excellence, NYUAD develops knowledge, fosters creativity, and helps solve humanity's shared challenges. In partnership with Abu Dhabi, NYUAD contributes to the local knowledge-based economy and society and plays a central role in NYU's global mission.

NYU Abu Dhabi's distinctive vision is characterized by some of the following principles:

- Dedication to education that develops critical thinking, empathy, integrity, leadership, and a love of lifelong learning.
- Advancement of a new model of global higher education that attracts students from across the world, fostering intercultural understanding and global citizenship.
- Passion for discovery, innovation, and the sharing of knowledge, rooted in thinking that transcends traditional disciplines.
- Commitment to being an anchor institution in and of Abu Dhabi as a dynamic hub for knowledge, culture, and innovation.

ROLE OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

The CFO oversees the financial and business health of the institution, supporting 2,500 students and 1,500 faculty and staff, ensuring fiscal stability, operational efficiency, and alignment with NYU's global governance. The role has institutional authority to shape financial and business policies that drive NYUAD's sustainability and strategic growth.

Reporting to the COO and leading a team of 46 professionals, including six direct reports, the CFO provides strategic oversight of financial planning and analysis, budgeting, accounting and reporting, treasury and investments, procurement, risk management, and business partnerships. As a member of the University leadership team, the CFO advises the Vice Chancellor, Provost, and COO, shaping fiscal strategy, strengthening financial infrastructure, and enabling informed, data-driven decision-making.

Strategic Business and Financial Leadership

Define and execute NYUAD's long-term business and financial strategy, aligning resources with academic, research, and operational priorities. Serve as the chief financial strategist to the COO and Vice Chancellor,

providing fiscal and operational insights to drive institutional decision-making. Oversee governance frameworks, ensuring compliance with UAE laws, NYU global policies, and partnership agreements.

Business Planning, Budgeting, and Forecasting

Lead the development and monitoring of multi-year operating and capital budgets, integrating data analytics and scenario modeling. Partner with NYUAD's Government Partners to negotiate, report, and manage the annual funding envelope. Align resource planning with institutional KPIs and strategic objectives.

Treasury, Investment, and Risk Management

Oversee liquidity management, endowment performance, banking relationships, and capital financing strategies. Lead enterprise risk management and ensure adherence to internal controls and investment policies. Provide oversight of cash flow optimization and strategic use of reserves.

Financial and Operational Infrastructure

Oversee controllership, accounting, and business operations to ensure accuracy, transparency, and efficiency in NYUAD's financial position in compliance with GAAP and audit standards. Drive the integration of business systems across NYUAD and the global NYU network.

Strategic Partnerships and Institutional Relations

Represent NYUAD in fiscal and business discussions with NYU New York, Government Partners, external auditors, and financial institutions. Build trusted relationships with global university and finance leaders and align local practices with international best standards in higher education business administration. Serve on and play a leading role in the Joint Finance Advisory Committee of NYUAD.

Leadership, Culture, and Capability Development

Lead and inspire a high-performing business and finance organization that embodies NYUAD's values of transparency, integrity, and service excellence. Mentor senior leaders, build succession pipelines, and promote professional development.

Policy, Compliance, and Continuous Improvement

Establish governance frameworks, business policies, and internal controls. Ensure full compliance with UAE regulations and NYU global policies. Drive continuous improvement initiatives through Lean and digital transformation of financial and administrative processes.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Provide Strategic Financial Leadership and Long-Term Planning

NYU Abu Dhabi is at a critical point in its evolution, with increasing desire for strategic growth, diversification, and institutional maturity. The CFO will play a central role in defining and executing a long-term financial strategy aligned with the University's academic and research ambitions and its partnership with the Government of Abu Dhabi. While the institution has historically operated through an annual, largely centralized budgeting approach, there is an opportunity to establish a more formal, forward-looking financial planning framework. The CFO will lead multi-year financial planning efforts that forecast revenues (tuition, grants, auxiliary services) and expenditures. The CFO will be responsible for aligning academic and strategic goals with evolving market and enrollment trends, using predictive models of enrollment, discount rates, and demographic shifts. The CFO must ensure the long-term financial plan directly supports the University's broader academic and strategic mission.

Strengthen Integration Across Financial Functions

NYUAD operates within a structure that includes both central finance and distributed academic and research finance functions. There is a significant opportunity—and need—to better integrate these areas, particularly across academic finance, research administration, and central financial operations. The CFO will partner with faculty leadership and University offices to align research administration practices with institutional goals. This will require strengthening processes that enable responsible research growth while minimizing administrative burden, while also maintaining compliance with sponsor, University, and regulatory requirements. The CFO will work closely with the provost's organization and administrative leaders to align processes, clarify roles, and improve coordination. Establishing stronger vertical integration, building shared accountability, and embedding financial expertise within academic units will be critical to improving effectiveness and ensuring consistency in financial decision-making across the institution.

NYUAD establishes high standards of compliance with respect to the applicable tax regulations in the UAE, the U.S., and abroad. The CFO will have to ensure that the University is in compliance with UAE/GCC regulations and U.S. federal, state, and local tax laws, and enforce appropriate policies and procedures to meet its compliance requirements and protect the University's tax-exempt status.

Advance the Funding Model and External Partnership

A defining feature of NYUAD is its funding model, which relies heavily on Tamkeen, a single government partner. Tamkeen Abu Dhabi LLC is an Abu Dhabi-based entity, a subsidiary of the Executive Affairs Authority (EAA), partnering with leading local and international institutions to deliver projects that enrich the UAE's social, cultural, and educational landscape. The CFO will play a highly visible and strategic role in managing this relationship, working closely with Tamkeen and other stakeholders to support financial planning, reporting, and long-term alignment. This includes active engagement in governance structures,

including the Joint Finance Advisory Committee. Given the importance of this relationship, the CFO must bring experience navigating complex, state-like funding environments and will serve as a key institutional representative in external financial discussions.

Drive Revenue Diversification and Financial Strategy for Growth

As NYUAD continues to expand its academic and research portfolio, there is an opportunity to diversify revenue streams beyond government funding. This includes strengthening executive and professional education, advancing philanthropy in an evolving donor environment, and exploring innovative approaches to monetizing campus assets and capabilities. The CFO will partner with academic and administrative leaders to develop a strategic financial roadmap for these efforts, including market analysis, pricing strategy, and investment prioritization. Establishing a more disciplined and sustainable approach to revenue diversification.

Enhance Procurement and Operational Effectiveness

The procurement function represents a significant opportunity for improvement and impact. Currently viewed as underdeveloped, procurement has the potential to become a more strategic lever for operational efficiency and value creation. The CFO will assess and reposition this function, establishing stronger policies, improving service delivery, and ensuring that procurement supports research, academic, and operational needs effectively. More broadly, the CFO will continue to strengthen core financial operations—including budgeting, reporting, and compliance—while driving consistency and efficiency across the organization.

Strengthen Systems, Data, and Financial Infrastructure

As the University grows in complexity, there is an increasing need for more integrated systems, improved data accessibility, and enhanced financial reporting capabilities. The CFO will lead efforts to modernize financial infrastructure, improve data integration across systems, and enable more robust analytics to support decision-making. This includes strengthening connections with NYU's central finance function in New York, where opportunities exist to increase alignment, leverage shared systems, and adopt common standards where appropriate.

Build Organizational Capability and a Cohesive Finance Function

The CFO will inherit a capable but evolving finance organization, with opportunities to strengthen leadership, clarify structure, and build deeper institutional expertise. This includes better integrating newer functions such as procurement and academic finance, while also investing in talent development and succession planning. The CFO will be expected to foster a culture of collaboration, accountability, and service, ensuring that the finance function operates as a trusted partner across the University.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one person will embody them all, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications, skills, experiences, and personal qualities.

Required Education: Bachelor's degree in finance, accounting, economics, business administration, or a related field is required.

Required Experience:

- Minimum of 15+ years of progressively senior leadership experience in complex, global, or higher education environments.
- Proven experience in strategic financial planning, business operations, risk management, and stakeholder engagement at an executive level.
- Demonstrated success managing large-scale budgets (>\$500M), investments, and capital projects.
- Expertise in financial modeling, scenario planning, and investment management, with the ability to support institutional decision-making and long-term financial sustainability.
- Strong leadership presence with the ability to influence at Board and government levels.
- Proven ability to operate across cultures and institutions with diplomacy and integrity.
- Advanced proficiency in Oracle or similar enterprise business systems, with experience leveraging financial systems and data to enhance reporting, analysis, and operational effectiveness.
- Demonstrated experience overseeing financial planning, accounting, reporting, and business operations within complex organizations.
- Strong organizational, analytical, and problem-solving skills, with the ability to manage multiple priorities and deadlines with an appropriate sense of urgency.

Preferred Education: Doctoral degree (PhD) or Executive MBA with specialization in strategic finance, business leadership, or global management.

Preferred Experience:

- Two or more years of senior leadership experience at a global university, research institution, or multinational organization in the GCC.
- Direct experience working with government entities and joint venture governance frameworks.
- Understanding of financial practices within higher education or similarly complex, mission-driven organizations.
- Experience working with large, integrated financial systems or enterprise resource planning (ERP) environments.

Authority and Accountability

- Develops and executes financial and business strategies and institutional policies.
- Exercises signatory authority for NYUAD's financial commitments, investments, and capital expenditures.
- Represents NYUAD at joint NYU–Government Finance Committees and institutional governance boards, escalating only matters with material financial, contractual, or reputational risk.

- Ensures fiscal stability, operational efficiency, and adherence to UAE regulatory requirements and NYU global policies.

Critical Thinking and Decision Making

- Leads complex decision-making across financial and operational domains, balancing liquidity, growth, compliance, and innovation.
- Anticipates internal and external risks, shaping long-term fiscal and business resilience.
- Applies strategic, analytical, and creative thinking to evaluate alternatives, develop recommendations, and support institutional priorities.
- Demonstrates sound judgment and decision-making based on accurate and timely financial analysis.

Internal/External Contacts

- Works closely with NYUAD leadership, academic and administrative units, and internal finance teams to guide budgeting, financial planning, and policy compliance.
- Serves as a trusted advisor to senior leadership, effectively communicating complex financial information to a wide range of stakeholders.
- Represents NYUAD in fiscal matters with Government Partners, NYU New York, external auditors, and financial institutions.
- Manages key relationships with banks, vendors, and regulatory bodies to ensure transparency, financial stewardship, and compliance with UAE and NYU global standards.
- Demonstrates exceptional communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to engage diverse constituencies and build strong, collaborative relationships.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/nyu-abu-dhabi/chief-financial-officer>.

Sean Farrell, Partner

Dan Rodas, Partner

Steph Simon, Senior Associate

Nicole Sancilio, Managing Search Coordinator

Isaacson, Miller

NYU is an Equal Opportunity Employer and is committed to a policy of equal treatment and opportunity in every aspect of its recruitment and hiring process.

This Position Description in no way states or implies that these are the only duties to be performed by the employee in this position. It does not limit the assignment of related duties not mentioned.

All employees are expected to carry out their responsibilities in a manner consistent with NYU and NYUAD's values, principles, policies and strong commitment to diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging

All employees are required to comply with NYUAD's Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Policy, procedures and programs. This includes but is not limited to taking reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others, completing the required health and safety training, reporting unsafe acts, unsafe conditions, accidents, and incidents to their supervisor without the fear of retaliation, and participate in OSH activities and make recommendations for continual improvement as required.

Employees supervising staff are required to implement and enforce NYUAD's OSH Policy, procedures and programs within their areas of responsibility. This includes ensuring that hazards are risk assessed, controlled and communicated, and that employees have the required supervision, training and competency to perform their duties safely.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by NYU Abu Dhabi. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by NYU Abu Dhabi would supersede any conflicting information in this document.

APPENDIX: ABOUT NYU ABU DHABI

Academics at NYUAD

NYU is ranked 33rd globally by Times Higher Education (2025), making NYUAD the UAE's top-ranked university. NYUAD is home to 370 highly distinguished faculty, of whom 93 percent hold the highest degrees in their fields, including three Nobel laureates. NYUAD's students are among the most talented and motivated in the world. Acceptance rates are comparable to those of the most selective institutions in the world, with only five percent of the 18,700 applicants admitted for the class of 2026. The exceptional educational environment has produced 24 Rhodes Scholars in the last decade, as well as numerous Schwarzman Scholars and Fulbright Awards, among other accolades for academic achievement.

The University offers 26 undergraduate [majors](#) across four divisions: Arts & Humanities, Engineering, Science, and Social Science. NYUAD also offers three master's and eleven doctoral programs. Students benefit from small class sizes, plentiful undergraduate and graduate research opportunities, and vibrant student leadership, community engagement, and career planning programming. In the 2024-2025 academic year, NYUAD enrolled 2,043 undergraduate and 140 graduate students representing over 120 countries and speaking 75 languages. One quarter of the student population is Emirati.

Global education and experiences are also essential components of the four-year curriculum at NYUAD. NYUAD global educational experiences include semester-long study-away programs, January-Term programs (called J-Terms), and course-related study trips in the UAE as well as the broader Middle East.

Research at NYUAD

Faculty and research staff from NYUAD's four academic divisions have propelled the University to the forefront of 21st-century research, and NYUAD is a clear leader in discovery and innovation for the UAE and the Middle East region. Since the University's inception, NYUAD has published more than 9,200 peer-reviewed scholarly works and produced nearly 700 creative works.

A major source of research funding for the University is the NYU Abu Dhabi Research Institute. [The Research Institute](#) is a world-class center of cutting-edge and innovative research, scholarship, and cultural activity. It supports research centers that address questions of global significance and local relevance, allowing leading faculty members to carry out multidisciplinary scholarship and high-level research on a range of complex issues with depth, scale, and longevity that would not otherwise be possible. Leveraging its strength in interdisciplinary collaboration, the Institute promotes a broad range of innovative, multi-year team projects, specially designed to benefit Abu Dhabi, make significant contributions to scholarship, scientific progress, human understanding, and artistic creativity.

Overall, NYUAD has more than 90 designated research labs, centers, and group projects, many of which are multidisciplinary—reflecting NYUAD's commitment to addressing complex global challenges. To support research, facilitate the adoption and deployment of novel technologies, and nurture innovations

that develop into viable business opportunities, NYUAD regularly engages with industries, government entities, investors, startups, and entrepreneurs.

More about NYU

NYU's story is one of vibrant growth and dramatic shifts across its academic reputation, the eminence of its faculty across diverse fields, the size and influence of its research portfolio, the quality of its students, and the strength of its undergraduate, graduate, and professional education programs. The University is adventurous and ambitious. NYU rewards entrepreneurship, inspires philanthropy, and is determined to continue its remarkable upward trajectory.

As NYU approaches its bicentennial in 2031, the leadership team has established a set of [strategic pathways](#) to serve as guideposts for the University: interdisciplinary research and education, scientific and technological entrepreneurship, leadership in global education and research, and building flourishing communities. NYUAD plays a significant role in each of these areas. The enabling pathways of organizational culture, creating new resources, and storytelling are also critical elements of the Vice Chancellor's vision, as they pursue NYU's commitment to excellence, growth, and achieving the highest potential imaginable.

The NYU Global Network

NYU's location in one of the most diverse, internationally vibrant, and multicultural cities in the world set the stage for the creation of its [global network](#). The origins date back 50 years – starting with study abroad sites in Madrid and Paris – but the University's and New York City's international character has long been a distinctive element of NYU, attracting top scholars and students.

Alongside New York and Abu Dhabi, [NYU Shanghai](#) is the University's third international campus, a joint venture with East China Normal University. In 2017, NYU Shanghai graduated its inaugural undergraduate class, comprised of 51 percent Chinese students who scored in the top percentile of the *gaokao*, the national higher education entrance exam in China, and 49 percent from the U.S. and globally.

Thirteen global academic centers (in Accra, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Florence, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Melbourne, Paris, Prague, Tel Aviv, Tulsa, and Washington, DC) complement these portal campuses, allowing undergraduate students to study away for a semester or longer, and serving as research centers for faculty and graduate students.

The 2024-2025 Open Doors Report published by the Institute of International Education lists NYU as the number one institution for both the number of international students and the number of students who study abroad.

NYU's global network offers a worldwide interconnection of intellectual communities and resources, enabling each of the network's sites to benefit from the others. With deep roots in New York, NYU remains

very much a university “in and of the city,” as its founders envisioned, but reflecting the diversity, history, and dynamism of its home, today, it is also a university “in and of the world.”

Location

The United Arab Emirates is made up of seven emirates, with Abu Dhabi as its capital. Abu Dhabi is a dynamic global capital where tradition meets innovation, offering an exceptional quality of life in a cosmopolitan, safe, and vibrant environment. Nestled on the shores of the Arabian Gulf, the city boasts year-round sunshine, world-class cultural landmarks, stunning natural landscapes, and a thriving culinary and arts scene. As the political and economic heart of the UAE, Abu Dhabi is a hub for international business, research, and education—home to forward-thinking institutions and groundbreaking sustainability initiatives. On weekends, the many parks and beaches are popular, and Dubai is less than a 90-minute drive. Both Abu Dhabi and Dubai have become regional and global hubs for air travel, with much of Europe, India, Africa, and Asia a few hours' flight away.

NYU Abu Dhabi's Saadiyat Island campus is a pedestrian campus that combines traditional and modern architectural elements to reflect the University's three identities: Abu Dhabi, New York, and the world. Designed by Rafael Viñoly Architects, the campus promotes interaction between living and learning, research and teaching, and the disciplines, as well as faculty, students, and staff. The arrangement of offices, the visibility across large areas and between indoors and outdoors, the connections between buildings so that none stand alone, the outdoor gathering spaces, and residential living are among the ways the campus's design encourages this interaction.

Saadiyat Island is Abu Dhabi's premier cultural and lifestyle destination, where natural beauty and world-renowned institutions come together. Just minutes from the city center, the island is home to iconic landmarks such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi, with future additions including the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and Zayed National Museum. The NYU Abu Dhabi campus aims to cultivate a deep engagement with the Abu Dhabi community and, more broadly, the region through academic collaboration, public arts performances, museum-quality exhibitions, and recreational outreach programs for families and children.