

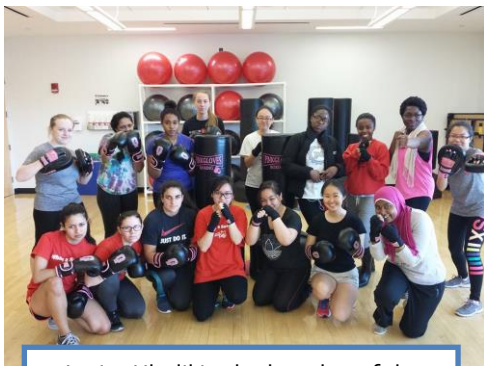


## SUCCESS STORY

### Amira Khalil – MBA Scholar



Amira Khalil while announcing her new position as the Secretary of the MBA student association.



Amira Khalil in the last day of the boxing course in tier 1

Photos Source: Debbie Scibek, Program Officer/ Institute of International Education (IIE)

USAID-funded HEI scholar Amira Khalil arrived to the United States in August 2015 to begin a Master of Business Administration (MBA) at the State University of New York Stony Brook (SUNY Stony Brook). When she first arrived to the United States, Amira faced challenges that other international students face, including adjusting to a new country (and in particular, a college town like Long Island); exploring the services and activities offered by her university; finding convenient housing; and socializing and building a network. Amira said “I felt like a stranger; it was difficult to fit in.” She was unsure of what people thought about an international Muslim woman at her university.

Despite this rocky start, Amira researched organizations to find information. She found a pamphlet for international students on surviving life at Stony Brook. During the second semester, Amira began participating in on-campus community groups. She attended events for the Muslim Student Association, including community service activities. She also joined a boxing club that she had learned about from a member of the Muslim Student Association. When asked what she thinks about the boxing club, Amira responds emphatically “I love it! After every session, I feel super!” In the spring, she attended one of the general body meetings and connected with the now-President of the MBA association, who spoke with her about the organization. After this, Amira was nominated and elected to be the secretary for the MBA association. Furthermore, Amira is currently a Business Intern at the Small Business Development Center at stony Brook and a Business Development Intern at a newly opened restaurant.

“By the end of the first semester, I realized that almost all of my classmates knew me by name.” That was Amira’s response when asked about her social life. Amira was able to improve her networking and interpersonal skills during her first semester in Stony Brook. Amira feels she “likes SUNY Stony Brook much more, more than I ever thought I



Amira Khalil with her boxing pink gloves



would. I am trying to take advantage during this period of my life to do things that will hopefully make an impact on both myself and others.” She is trying to coordinate a welcoming event for new International Students coming to the MBA program. Amira is also working to coordinate quality-management research with a professor at the university. She shared “I have gotten used to the environment and style of living here, so I do not feel like a stranger as I felt at the beginning anymore.” She says that, through all of this, one of the most surprising things is that “I really, really love Long Island! This is shocking for me!” Now Amira enjoys how spread out and un-crowded the area is, and does not like going to crowded places like New York City.

The HEI Scholarships program is the one which gave Amira the opportunity to come to the United States. She says there was support and encouragement from the IIE in Washington, DC, to get involved in activities since she arrived. One of the main ways she felt pushed was the encouragement she received to participate in an internship. As she began researching and utilizing the resources suggested to her by the Egypt STEP staff to find an internship, she realized there are a lot more activities and resources at the university than she first thought. Because she was required to update her resume for an internship, she realized that she wanted to get more involved in activities on campus to add to her resume. She had to talk to a lot of people to find out about an internship, which “urged me to move.”

Though initially she faced challenges with adapting to life in the United States, feeling isolated and un-supported, Ms. Khalil has taken incredible strides to move forward and engage with her university activities. As of the spring term, Ms. Khalil has become involved in a boxing course, where she completed level 1. She was also nominated to be the Secretary of the MBA student association, where she is working on creating more resources and activities to support international students arriving to SUNY Stony Brook in the fall of 2016.

### Telling Our Story

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