Prof Ahmed Cassim Bawa is a theoretical physicist. He currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of Universities South Africa. Most of his professional life, which included a term as Programme Officer at the Ford Foundation, has been dedicated to the university sector.

Professor Bawa, who has been Vice-Chancellor and principal of the Durban University of Technology has previously held the position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor at both the University of Natal and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Until August 2010 he was a faculty member of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at Hunter College and a member of the doctoral faculty at the Graduate Center, City University of New York.

Professor Bawa has served on science, technology, and higher education policy teams, and was an inaugural member of the National Advisory Council on Innovation. He is a fellow of both the Royal Society of South Africa and the Academy of Science of South Africa. He has been board chair of the Foundation for Research Development, and vice-chair of the Atomic Energy Corporation.