For eight seasons, fans of the HBO series *Entourage* have followed the exploits of fictional movie star Vincent Chase (Adrian Grenier) and his band of buddies that included his best friend/manager "E" (Kevin Connolly), his brother Johnny Drama (Kevin Dillon) and his driver/pal Turtle (Jerry Ferrara). The series currently hurtles towards its conclusion with only three episodes remaining.

This week’s episode, “The Big Bang” (which airs Sunday night on HBO), includes a very special guest: UCLA Anderson Professor Bhagwan Chowdhry, who joins a host of entertainment superstars, from Eminem to Matt Damon to Larry David, who have portrayed themselves on *Entourage*. Earlier this week, Chowdhry spoke to The UCLA Anderson Blog regarding his appearance.

"I received an email from (casting director) Susan Abramson," said Chowdhry. "She said 'I read about FAB and love what you're doing. Would you like to make a cameo appearance on Entourage?'"

FAB -- Financial Access at Birth -- is a program developed by Chowdhry. It is a social and economic innovation that seeks financial inclusion. FAB's website defines "inclusion" like this: "Full financial inclusion is a state in which all people who can use them have access to a full suite of quality financial services, provided at affordable prices, in a convenient manner, and with dignity for the clients. Financial services are delivered by a range of providers, most of them private, and reach everyone who can use them, including disabled, poor, and rural populations." You can learn more about FAB by accessing their website.

Chowdhry was intrigued, though he admits he hadn't watched Entourage. He wrote back to Abramson expressing a willingness to discuss an appearance. He then met with series executive producer Doug Ellin to discuss his scene, one in which he appears with a journalist named Sophia (portrayed by Alice Eve) who is involved with Grenier's Vince. (Chowdhry said when he first read the script and saw Vince talking with the journalist he wondered why his character was called "Vince.")

Discussions on the scene continued, with Chowdhry making some minor edits to what his character might say. The edits include one that would make a marketing professor proud, his insistence that he be identified as UCLA Anderson Professor Bhagwan Chowdhry. Chowdhry was leaning towards playing the part, citing a desire to publicize FAB, and when Ellin told him President Barack Obama was a fan of the show, Chowdhy was in.

From then on, Chowdhry was an actor. He worked with the wardrobe department. He familiarized himself with his scene, one in which he and the journalist are in a restaurant talking when Vince arrives, giving the professor the chance to tell the actor about the good work FAB does. (Chowdhry declined to reveal too much about the scene; he also refused to discuss the final episode of Entourage despite this blog's attempt at bribery.)

Chowdhry isn't sure what impact his Entourage appearance will have on FAB. (FAB's press release about the episode is linked here.) He's looking forward to seeing what the publicity does for the program. In the meantime, he's kept in touch with Grenier and Eve. Both actors spent time with him between shooting takes learning more about FAB and have retained their interest in the months since the taping, keeping in touch with Chowdhry.

The professor learned a few things himself. He says that he learned "what it takes to produce a television program, the organization and the amount of people involved in creating a short scene. "I was surprised at how long it took," said Chowdhry. "Everyone was very professional, but I told them when we were done that I was glad I have a day job."

When he's not teaching, doing research or acting, Chowdhry blogs for the Huffington Post. (He's also the faculty director for Anderson's Master of Financial Engineering program.) His most recent post, "It Takes a Village to Write a Scholarly Research Article" was published earlier this week. In the post, Chowdhry details the collaborative effort it often takes to turn a series of loose ideas into a paper worthy of publication in a top journal. In it he writes:

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So, after more than ten years since the time I began thinking about organization capital, a scholarly paper will now be published. Even though the published version carries three names as co-authors, it already has had significant input from nearly half a dozen referees, three editors, and scores of participants at conferences and seminars all over the world. And here is the punchline. The editor wrote "you were early movers here" and quoted the referee who said that despite some potential problems (such as the difficulty of measuring some of the key variables in the paper), this paper should get some credit for the novelty of the topic and hope that other researchers will pick up on some of these ideas. So after a dozen years or so, we are still just at the start line! That is what research is. That is what occupies most academics at top research universities around the world.
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HBO's Entourage Page

Financial Access at Birth

FAB's Entourage Press Release

Bhagwan Chowdhry's Huffington Post page

Bhagwan Chowdhry's "It Takes a Village" Huffpost blog entry