

## Speaker encourages students to push boundaries and explore cultures

**Rachel Ingram**

*ringram@unca.edu - Contributor*

**Chris Bashinelli, an actor, writer and producer,** credits his one-month-long study abroad session in Tanzania as the experience that altered the trajectory of his life.

During what he passionately referred to as “an open dialogue” in Highsmith Union on last Wednesday, the very energetic Bashinelli urged an audience of less than two dozen to venture out of their comfort zones and accomplish their own goals in life. Dressed casually in jeans and a flannel button-down, 27-year-old Bashinelli sipped a Red Bull and bounced around the room for over an hour during his speech.

His keynote address, sponsored by the Study Abroad/Study Away department at UNCA as part of the week-long International Education Week, encouraged students to pursue diversity-enriching opportunities. For many students, the Study Abroad office may be the first step in the right direction. **Diane Royer, a university programs specialist,** attended Bashinelli’s speech and echoed his encouragement to students.

“Studying abroad helps you find yourself,” Royer said. “You learn about a new culture, but you also learn about yourself. We’re all different, but we can all relate.”

**Forest Wallingford and M.C. Bones** were the two students behind the event. They said they sought out Bashinelli to speak as a part of International Education Week, because he is an excellent role model for college students.

“This whole week is based on making an effort to understand someone else,” Bones said.

According to Wallingford and Bones, Bashinelli stood out to them as someone who is young, relatable and made admirable accomplishments in the area of diversity awareness.

“We felt that he would be the best person to bring a message on the importance of connecting with others,” said Wallingford, who studied abroad in Croatia during high school.

To help students practice individual thinking and achieve better clarity in their lives, the Brooklyn native led the group through several mini-meditation sessions. He said he believes every individual should strive to silence outside influences, because trying to meet someone else’s expectation rarely leads to happiness.

“Ultimately, your life purpose needs to be personal to you,” Bashinelli said.

During his presentation, Bashinelli screened part of a previously-recorded interview with his mentor, Jane Goodall, who also advocated for students to “ignore the noise” and allow their dreams and convictions to direct their lives, regardless of how intimidating that may be.

Bashinelli told the audience he dealt with his share of hardships in life, but became more and more confident the farther he walked down his life path.

“If your intention is strong enough, and is altruistic, I think forces of goodwill come to your aid to help you along the way,” he said.

The Marymount Manhattan College graduate went on “hundreds” of auditions during college, only to be turned down over and over. When he finally landed a supporting role on “The Sopranos,” he said he didn’t feel the sense of accomplishment and ecstasy he anticipated would come with being an actor. After the death of his father and biggest role model in 2009, he said he went through a period of time when he felt lost.

“Each time I set a goal and then reached it, it didn’t bring me the joy that I thought it would,” he said.

He said he realized he would never be able to reach his end goal, because it always changed before he got there.

“You will never get fulfillment in life from an external goal. The feeling of success comes from the action alone,” Bashinelli said.

**Rachel Coleman, a junior a UNCA,** said she was very inspired by what Bashinelli had to say. She said she hopes to spend a semester in Austria experiencing a new way of life while earning 12 credit hours toward her international studies degree.

“After hearing about everything that he has done at just 27 years old, it makes me wonder what impact I could potentially make with my life,” Coleman said.

Bashinelli created “Bridge the Gap TV,” the production company behind his PBS TV series of the same name. He ventured to Abu Dhabi, Haiti, South Dakota and Uganda to film the four episodes currently in the series. He said he hopes his TV show exposes viewers to new ways of life and thinking, uniting the world to bring about positive change.

“From understanding comes respect, and then and only then, comes change,”

## SGA members encourage student feedback on OnePort changes

**Harper Spires**

*hspires@unca.edu - Contributor*

UNC Asheville’s Information Technology Services works on updating the school’s technology and website and is looking for student feedback. A master calendar of all on-campus and some local events has been created at [calendar.unca.edu](http://calendar.unca.edu), and there is a new campus news website at [news.unca.edu](http://news.unca.edu).

ITS also plans to update OnePort.

“Most people hate OnePort, and it takes a million clicks to get anywhere,” said **Luke Withrow, an ITS webmaster.**

Withrow said ITS plans to find the most common tasks students and faculty do on OnePort and reduce the number of “clicks” to navigate the webpage. The new page will provide single quick links to pages like Moodle, calendar, book requests and others. Withrow also said they are open to website advancements like customization of the OnePort homepage, a more personalized calendar and possible a university mobile app for smart phones.

All website advancements are a work in progress, and ITS hopes to receive student feedback before going much further with the new website. Comments, questions and feedback may be directed to Luke Withrow at [lwithrow@unca.edu](mailto:lwithrow@unca.edu).

*In other news:*

Leigh Whittaker, SGA president, attended the final Student Fee Committee meeting last Thursday. The committee, with the exception of the athletic fee, approved most student fees. The proposed athletic fee increase was \$45, but SGA and the committee voted to reduce it to \$30. There will be further voting and approval on the student fee changes at a higher administrative level.

Matt Turpin, executive of external affairs, attended the University Planning Council, where they discussed various topics, including UNCA’s increased involvement in the community.

Bashinelli said.

Self-assured and smiling, he said he now views challenges as opportunities and lives his life with the intention of having a global impact, experiencing cultures different from his own and connecting people through media. He said he devoted his life to traveling all over the world in order to experience others’ perspectives.

an updated master plan and future sustainability plans.

Turpin also scheduled Know Your Rights Week for Jan. 27-30.

Harry Samuels, executive of sustainability, works with the school on shuttle routes, and with Asheville Transportation regarding bus routes on and off the UNCA campus.

SGA is discussing a reform of structure, which may include changes in the office hours system, a new committee for legislative tasks and external and internal aspects of committees. SGA plans to have the new system in place by spring semester, and they said they hope the changes will streamline processes.

“The intent of the changes is to reign SGA back into its most recent mission, which is more directed towards policy oversight, reform and suggestion,” said **Josh Owens, SGA vice president.**

Sen. Ben Judge attended the Faculty Senate meeting last Friday, where the Senate passed new curriculum changes unanimously. Changes include the removal of clusters and health and wellness classes. The Faculty Senate will vote at their next meeting in December on whether or not changes will affect current students.

Sen. Charlie White helps Sen. Samuels with a smaller-scale Greenfest for the spring semester. White also looks into getting additional compost bins on campus and researching legal resources for students in Asheville for Know Your Rights Week.

Sen. Joe Baker continues to accept applications for the SGA student focus group. Interested students can email Baker at [jbaker1@unca.edu](mailto:jbaker1@unca.edu).

A new Bulldog Bargain available for students at VegHeads. For the month of November, students and faculty may buy a sandwich or wrap and get a free side of their choice on Thursdays between 3 p.m. and closing time. For the month of December, students and faculty may get 15 percent off their purchase.

Bashinelli said his goal is to inspire students to make small steps in their own lives that could someday change the world.

“It’s important to take action now, before your life and opinions are completely formed and set,” he said. “If you have dreams, start figuring out how you can make them a reality. Don’t wait.”