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Chocolate University Unveiled

Springfield, MO, December 4, 2007—Drury University is partnering with Askinosie Chocolate on a new venture that brings real-world experiences into classrooms at Boyd-Berry Elementary School through a program titled Chocolate University.

The venture will include Boyd Elementary students and Drury education majors in providing cross-disciplinary experiences by using the resources of Askinosie Chocolate. Drury's faculty and students have developed a curriculum that teaches ethics, social studies, culture, natural resources, language, sustainability, business and fair trade practices, by first interesting the kids in something they all love... chocolate.

"One attribute that makes Drury special is the strong ties the university has to its community," said Todd Parnell, interim president of Drury University. "This new collaboration with local entrepreneur Shawn Askinosie and Boyd Elementary in the creation of The Chocolate University further strengthens those ties."

The Askinosie Chocolate factory sits blocks from Springfield's largest homeless shelter. On any given night the shelter houses 60-70 kids, many of which attend Boyd Elementary. Shawn Askinosie's original vision was to somehow participate in the lives of kids in the neighborhood by giving them a chance to see and do things that might give them hope in a new way.

"Our Chocolate University dream would not be possible without the people of Drury University and Boyd Elementary making it a reality," said Shawn Askinosie, Founder and Chocolate Maker. "There is no way measure the joy that we get in bringing the art of chocolate making to the children at Boyd. If we can inspire one child then we have been successful."

Chocolate University is funded by factory tours given by Askinosie Chocolate. The first class of Chocolate University includes 18 fourth grade students. The curriculum will include field trips to the factory to apply the learnings and student contact via e-mail with those living in Mexico, where Askinosie's cacao beans are grown. The final Chocolate University class will be a daylong participatory experience at the School of Economics in Blue Springs, where students will learn how to develop and market products for a specific country.

Askinosie Chocolate is a small batch, bean-to-bar chocolate manufacturer located in Springfield, Missouri, sourcing 100% of their beans directly from the farmers. Shawn Askinosie travels to regions of Mexico and Ecuador to work directly with the farmers and source cocoa beans for his chocolate. This allows the chocolate to be traced to the source and labeled Authentic Single Origin Chocolate. It also enables Shawn to profit share with the farmers, giving them a Stake In the Outcome™. Askinosie Chocolate is committed to chocolate that tastes good, is good for the farmers, and is good for the planet. Real people. Real places. We exist to create great tasting chocolate made by people who love this noble craft. We do not want to win the "best chocolate in the world" award. We do aim though to be the best little chocolate factory in the world.