



Chocolate University High School International Business Immersion Frequently Asked Questions and Answers from CU Alumni

Q: Am I eligible to apply to Chocolate University?

A. Southwest Missouri high school juniors and seniors attending public, private, or homeschool are eligible to apply. Students should plan to graduate in 2027 or 2028 and be 16 years old by July 1, 2027. Applicants should be interested in exploring international cultures and business and able to share their plan to apply their anticipated learnings to their future success. Experienced and first-time travelers are welcome. Students must be available to attend monthly prep meetings scheduled from November through July 2027 from approx. 4:30 to 7pm near the Drury University campus.

Q: What kind of student is a good fit for Chocolate University?

A. Students who are curious about the world, open to new experiences, and are interested in making a positive impact should apply for Chocolate University. You don't need prior experience in business, travel, or leadership to be a good fit for this opportunity. Students who lead with curiosity and empathy, enter spaces with humility and a willingness to learn, and strive to make a positive social impact should apply! - Meredith W., CU Alumna

A. Anyone who wants to know more about the world and their place in it. Chocolate University gave me experiences that still transform my behaviors and beliefs 10 years later. If you are open to the unknown, you will be a great fit for this program. With a range of personalities and experiences, you'll find that CU classes have a diverse makeup—there isn't a "perfect" applicant. - Anna M., CU Alumna

Q: Who will be traveling on the trip?

A. The group of travelers includes 5-6 adults: Shawn Askinosie, 1-2 members of the Askinosie Chocolate corporate team, 1-2 from Askinosie Foundation leadership, and a faculty member from Drury University. Alumni have also traveled with us in leadership roles. A Drury student, usually from the business school, also accompanies the group of 12-14 student travelers and serves as a Resident Assistant.

Q: What is the interview like?

A. The selection committee is composed of approx 5 adults, including high school teachers, along with representatives from Drury University, Askinosie Foundation, and Askinosie Chocolate. During the virtual interview meeting, the committee will ask questions based on your application and make it easy to share your ideas about how you will use the CU experience in your future plans. The group is friendly and helpful.

Q: How much does the trip cost?

A. Students selected for the CU Class of 2027 will pay a registration fee of \$500-750 to the Askinosie Foundation to participate in Chocolate University. This fee will be determined based on travel costs and will combine with donated scholarship funds from individuals and businesses supporting the program to cover student costs. The 2027 budgeted cost is \$6200 per student traveler and includes airfare, lodging, meals, preparation classes, travel insurance, and security. Incidental costs to be covered by the individual student traveler could include vaccinations/immunizations, a carry-on rolling suitcase, and passport application. Cost should not be a barrier for any student's participation. Need-based financial help is planned and will be reviewed with all applicants during the interview process.

Q: If I am selected to participate, what is the general timeline?

A. After interviews conclude and invitations are extended, a half-day student orientation will occur in November 2026. There will be monthly meetings between December and June 2027, and an on-campus overnight retreat lasting 3-4 days at Drury University in late June or early July 2027. Travel is anticipated to occur in mid- July 2027.

Q: I'm a busy student. Will I have time for this? What will I learn?

A. Yes, you will have time! The meetings are only once a month, leading up to July. - Max B., CU Alumnus

A. Everyone walks away with something different, but one of the most powerful things I learned was just how universal joy and connection are. The human spirit is a beautiful thing. You will also learn just how much chocolate you can eat in a single day. - Reagan W., CU Alumna

A. I learned skills that I carry with me today; it's the only high school activity still on my resume. - Brendan F., CU Alumnus

Q: Where will we travel?

A. Cocoa is typically grown in the “cocoa belt,” the area 20 degrees north and south of the equator. In the past, students have traveled to Askinosie Chocolate’s origin in Mababu, Tanzania. One unique task of Chocolate University students this year will be to research chocolate origins and farming partners in Africa, Asia, and South America. While the Askinosie Foundation has a few options in mind, we want students to develop a primary understanding of global economies, cross-cultural relationships, and ethical sourcing. CU 2027 destination may include a return to one of our long-standing partner communities, engagement with new cocoa-growing regions in Africa, collaboration with current farmer partners in Southeast Asia, or another origin identified through careful, values-driven exploration. A final destination will be determined by March 1, 2027.

Q: Did you have to get any shots or take any special medicines before you went?

A. Always consult with your doctor to get advice on medications for your needs. [CDC recommendations](#) for travel abroad precautions are available online. Your doctor or the [Greene County Health Department](#) can administer vaccines for a fee.

Q: How long is the trip?

A. Most origin trips require 4-6 days on the ground and 4-5 days of travel to and from.

A. Our trip was 10 days. About five nights in the village plus travel time of about 2 days each way, but I wish it could be longer! - Tim H., CU Alumnus

Q: Did everyone on the trip get along? Will I make friends?

A. Yes! Our class got along extremely well. The Drury campus week was really helpful because we got to know each other before we embarked on a trip across the world. We really balanced each other out, and it was nice to have people to talk to and relate to on a trip as life-changing as this one. And, we still get together and keep in touch! - Emma B., CU Alumna

A. You will make friends. The people on the trip with you have similar mindsets, and when you travel across the world with someone, you will get pretty close. These might be some of the longest-lasting friendships you ever have. - Chase H., CU Alumnus

Q: What makes Chocolate University worth doing? How could participating impact my goals or mindset?

A. I started asking myself different questions: Where does my food come from? Who actually produced it, not just the company name on the package, but the individual person? How many steps did it take to get to me? - Reagan W., CU Alumna

A. There isn't really any other experience like CU because it has such an emphasis on personal growth and development. It uses chocolate as a metaphor and throughline for an extremely rich and rewarding experience, if students choose to make it that. Because of the love I experienced, it completely shifted my perception of what's important and has grounded me in a more enriching life. - Elijah K., CU Alumnus

Q: Is the Chocolate University trip like a mission trip?

A. CU is not a faith-based or service-based mission trip; it is a business immersion program with an element of travel. . While at a cocoa origin location, the group will spend the majority of time meeting with cocoa farming partners and conducting cocoa-related business. The students observe the business meetings and experience international trade negotiations firsthand. Prior to travel, prep meetings explain international commodity markets, review company financials, demystify profit sharing, address issues in the global cocoa supply chain, and explore the company’s bean-purchase transparency reporting model. Following guidance from the farmers and Askinosie’s local contacts, the CU class will also prepare, plan, and execute a student-led community project meeting a demonstrated need in the farming community. The group also dedicates time each evening for debriefing discussions and personal reflection.

Q: I see ethical sourcing, direct trade, and profit sharing mentioned in the application materials. What do these mean? Will I experience them?

A. Ethical sourcing is how you get your beans. The places you get them from must not use child or forced labor or any other unethical forms of labor and must treat workers well. Direct trade refers to the absence of middlemen in communication with farmers. Askinosie is directly negotiating and communicating with the farmers, creating a closer bond and more opportunities to build quality, cut out middlemen. With the profits from being more direct, they implement profit sharing, where a portion of the sales profits they earn are shared back with the farmers. - Chase H., CU Alumnus

Q: How safe is traveling to cocoa origin locations?

A. International group travel offers valuable educational opportunities, but it also carries risks that cannot always be fully predicted or prevented. Our approach is to prepare the group for known scenarios in advance, remain alert, and make informed decisions before and during travel. We monitor global geopolitical conditions, official US State Department travel guidance, stay in close communication with trusted local contacts (en route and at our origin destination), and work to avoid known risks and dangerous situations whenever possible. Chocolate University students receive training in safe travel practices and are expected to follow clear behavioral and safety expectations throughout the program. We strengthen our preparedness through these established travel policies, contingency and evacuation planning, and appropriate travel and medical insurance coverage. Lastly, we commit to communicating as much as possible with parents and company leaders, given available connectivity.

Still have a question? Please email CU Executive Director, Melissa Gelner, at mgelner@askinosie.com.