

CASE STUDY

How Follett Higher Education is turning campus stores into experiential learning environments.

Students want opportunities to develop the skills, confidence, and experience that prepare them for what comes next. For colleges and universities, experiential learning can help demonstrate the value of a college education by connecting classroom learning to career preparation. Follett saw an opportunity to create more of those experiences in a place already at the center of campus life: the campus store.

Through its Experiential Learning Program, developed in partnership with Saxbys, Follett places students in the paid, credit-bearing role of Student CEO, where they lead teams, make business decisions, analyze performance, and engage campus partners while gaining real-world experience. The model builds on Saxbys' established platform: among Student CEOs who completed their degrees between 2017 and

2025, 100% graduated on time and 90% went on to full-time employment, further education, or post-graduate training. The idea is simple: give students an opportunity to learn by leading.

Northeastern: From Student To Student CEO

Northeastern University became the first institution to bring Follett's Student CEO model into campus retail in Fall 2025, building on the university's longstanding commitment to experiential education. Since then, two Northeastern students have served as Follett Student CEOs, turning the campus store into an environment where they develop leadership, business, and career-ready skills through real responsibility.

One of Northeastern's Student CEOs, Joey Oltman, conducted interviews for campus store positions, made hiring decisions, trained new team members, and personally engaged more than 50 student organizations, building relationships that brought the campus store closer to student life. During his term, customer service scores increased, and the store increased year-over-year revenue while reducing operating expenses. But the student development behind those results is equally important.

Reflecting on his experience, Joey shared, "This program gives me a front-row seat to what it takes to lead in retail, from managing budgets and leading a team to creating an outstanding customer experience. It's hands-on, high-impact learning that I know will set me apart in any industry I pursue."



JOEY OLTMAN, STUDENT CEO, NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Temple University: A Campus Commitment To Extending Experiential Learning

At Temple University, the Follett Experiential Learning Program is part of a broader priority: creating meaningful opportunities for students to earn while they learn and build career-ready experience without leaving campus.

For many Temple students, working while pursuing a degree is a necessity. That makes access to experiential learning especially important. Traditional internships may not always be financially feasible, particularly when they are unpaid or require students to step away from paid employment. Temple sees campus-based experiential learning as an opportunity to bridge that gap by combining income, academic credit, and relevant professional experience.

The campus store was a natural place to extend that approach. Temple already had experience with the Student CEO model through Saxbys cafés on campus, where students gain hands-on responsibility leading café operations as part of Saxbys' experiential learning platform. Follett's partnership with Saxbys created an opportunity to extend that same learn-by-leading philosophy into another highly visible campus operation: the campus store.

As Jonathan C. Reiter, Vice President of Business Affairs & Administration at Temple University, explains, the value is in both the accessibility and the depth of the experience:



“For many of our students, working while earning their degree is a necessity, so we want those experiences to contribute meaningfully to their education and career preparation. The Follett Experiential Learning Program allows a student to earn income and academic credit while gaining real experience in areas like financial management, marketing, sales, operations, and leadership. That combination can be transformative.”

- JONATHAN D. REITER,
VICE PRESIDENT OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS & ADMINISTRATION,
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

Temple's inaugural Follett Student CEO, Emily Bastidas, is putting that model into practice. A junior in the Fox School of Business pursuing a B.B.A. in Accounting with a concentration in Data Analytics, Emily is gaining firsthand experience helping lead an operation where decisions about inventory, budgeting, marketing, sales, people, and customer experience have real outcomes.

From Early Momentum To Broader Impact

Experiences at Northeastern and Temple demonstrate the opportunity for both students and institutions, and the model continues to grow. Following Northeastern's initial launch, Follett expanded to Purdue University in Spring 2026. This fall, ELP reaches five campus partners, with Temple University, Community College of Philadelphia, and Brock University joining Northeastern and Purdue.

In Spring 2027, ELP will expand to the University of Texas at San Antonio, University at Buffalo – North Campus, Florida State University, Texas Christian University, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, and Texas State University.

Where Campus Life Meets Career Readiness

The growth of ELP points to a broader opportunity: when universities connect campus operations to their academic mission, they can create meaningful extensions of learning. For Follett, the campus store demonstrates how an existing campus environment can become more than a student job, giving students the opportunity to apply what they are learning, take on real responsibility, and graduate with career-ready experience.