

REAL LEARNING. REAL CHANGE.

The Experience First program at Greenville University is designed to bring growth and prosperity to local businesses and offer unprecedented learning opportunities to university students. Greenville Smart will continue this initiative to provide students with real-world learning experiences while also changing the way we think about the relationship between colleges and their local communities.



Eckert's Family Farms

Eckert's Family Farms is a popular retail and restaurant operation with multiple locations throughout southern Illinois and Kentucky.



We have high expectations of our students, because we know they'll rise to the challenge."

— **DANARA MOORE, FACULTY,
BRINER SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**

the challenge

Eckert's Family Farms needed a boost. While the company experienced heightened customer traffic during the spring, summer and fall, business slowed during winter. The company challenged Experience First students to find a way to increase the traffic during these slower winter months.

the strategy

A team of five Experience First students worked together to devise a strategy that would attract more customers to the company's Belleville location during the winter months. Capitalizing on what benefits a colder time of year might offer, students proposed several options, including the installation of an ice skating rink adjacent to the restaurant. This would make the Belleville location a notable attraction for the winter season. The team conducted thorough research to determine viability, feasibility and demand.



"I saw an opportunity in this correlation between students and the agricultural industry to have this working relationship where students learn, and we learn from students. I know there are a lot of bright young minds [at Greenville University] that can help us think a little differently."

— **ANGIE ECKERT, VICE PRESIDENT OF RETAIL OPERATIONS, ECKERT'S FAMILY FARMS**

the result

The company, convinced by the research and presentation provided by the Experience First team, went forward with the decision to install the ice-skating rink. The efforts attracted new and returning customers to the Belleville location to enjoy winter activities.



“

When teams of people with different cognitive skills learn not just how to hold them, but to share them, that's when creativity takes place. And we live in a time where creativity wins.”

— DR. IVAN FILBY, PRESIDENT
GREENVILLE UNIVERSITY



KAYLA
BLACK



MARY
DETERRING



ELSIE
HECKEL



BECCA
MCLEMORE



LINCOLN
SIEBERT

the Eckert's Family Farms team

Experience First teams are comprised of a diverse collection of bright, energetic Greenville University students. Their collaboration with businesses allows them to participate in meaningful, professional work.

Learning Lessons

Lincoln Siebert '17 knew that Experience First would equip him with the skills that are essential to workplace success. Experience First taught him the value of listening to teammates:

“Listen to others. Even some aspect of a bad idea may have value and turn your good idea into a better idea.”

— LINCOLN SIEBERT '17

Greenville University leads the way in reestablishing the viability of small colleges and rural communities as catalysts for industry, innovation and opportunity. Greenville Smart, the signature initiative of Greenville University, unifies the vast resources and connections of a college campus with the entrepreneurial spirit of local businesses to create a symbiotic university-community relationship that fosters economic growth and achievement.