Before joining Wal-Mart, Brewer held a number of executive positions at Kimberly-Clark.

Wal-Mart Stores (WMT), the world's biggest retailer, said last week that it has named Rosalind Brewer CEO of Sam's Club— the first woman and the first African-American to hold a CEO position at one of the company's business units. Brewer, 49, is replacing Brian Cornell, 52, who is leaving the company so he can return to the Northeast for family reasons.

Brewer, who will also be president of Sam's Club, was previously president of the retailer's U.S. East business unit. She will report to Wal-Mart CEO Mike Duke. The moves are effective Feb. 1.

Wal-Mart has in recent years has been battered by a combination of the slow-growing economy and its own decisions that caused U.S. customers to flee to competitors. But it has refocused on offering the lowest prices and shoppers' favorite goods and that strategy has been paying off.

In its third fiscal quarter ended Oct. 28, its net income fell 2.9% but it reversed a slump in U.S. namesake business.

Its Sam's Club warehouse club business has outperformed its namesake stores. Revenue in stores open at least one year rose 5.7% at Sam's Club and 1.3% at Walmart U.S. stores in its third quarter.

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Wal-Mart also said Friday that it is promoting Gisel Ruiz, 41, to executive vice president and chief operating officer for its U.S. operations. Ruiz has been an executive vice president working on human relations and store innovation issues.

Wal-Mart is also promoting Rollin Ford, 49, to chief administrative officer. Ford was chief information officer. He will be replaced as CIO by Karenann Terrell, 50.