

Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., CEFP, AIA

Let's wrap up the reading year by looking back at what we might have missed and what we can learn for the future. Here are two books that go together well. One is a quick read; the other is longer but equally valuable as you prepare New Year resolutions either for yourself or your organization.

HIGHER UNLEARNING: 39 POST-REQUISITE LESSONS FOR ACHIEVING A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

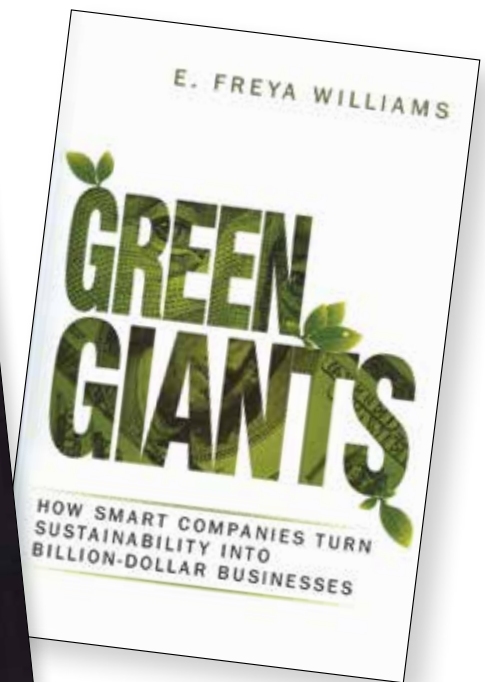
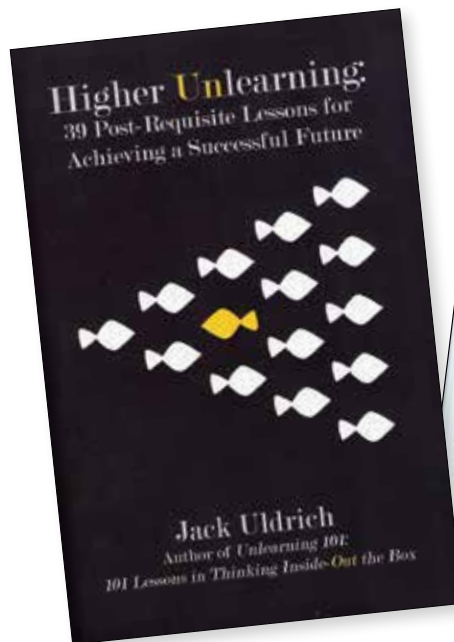
Jack Uldrich, Beaver's Pond Press, Edina, MN, 2011, 144 pp., hardcover \$23.95.

For those of you who missed the APPA Annual Conference in Chicago, we had another great closing keynote speaker, Jack Uldrich. It's possible to get a sense of his presentation by purchasing *Higher Unlearning*.

Higher Unlearning seems an unusual choice for organizations supporting colleges and universities. However, it will make sense when you peruse this clearly written, thought-provoking book.

So what is unlearning? The author explains that we gather observations (patterns) through our lives, and those observations help us process future observations and events. An example is the stock market, which recently experienced steep valuation drops. Many people believed in selling stocks as a way to avoid losing principal, thus driving prices down further. Counterintuitively, experts were warning not to sell and to plan on buying. Time will tell if they were correct (in the short term)—perhaps as soon as this review is published. But to get back to the point of unlearning: those experts may have learned to look at other patterns for their recommendations.

A scientific argument for unlearning can be found in mathematics, which



tells us that it's possible to interpolate between a set of data points, but that we cannot accurately predict a result outside those data points; engineering formulas used to analyze and design buildings are based on lengthy experiments and safety factors to address this theorem. But many of us don't rely on engineering formulas to make decisions for observations when we believe we have seen the patterns before.

Uldrich presents interesting problems of pattern recognition and misinterpretation. With each problem there is an explanation of the correct answer, and how we allow patterns (or knowledge

lore) to interfere with the correct analytical result. Some of these examples are historic: we now understand the correct result, because we have accepted a different set of patterns associated with the problem.

Higher Unlearning is a good read prior to initiating a process improvement project. It can help focus the team to pay attention to data outside the familiar patterns and to develop new—and ideally better—solutions to the process. *Higher Unlearning* should be read cover-to-cover, but can be used for selected examples when needed by the team.

GREEN GIANTS: HOW SMART COMPANIES TURN SUSTAINABILITY INTO BILLION-DOLLAR BUSINESSES

E. Freya Williams, Amacom, New York, 2015, 221 pages, hardcover \$27.95, Kindle \$17.46.

Normally one involved in a non-profit organization would avoid reading *Green Giants*, but it has particular relevance to many education organizations, particularly those signatories to the ACUPCC (American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment).


Green Giants is about some large companies that have made a corporate-wide commitment to sustainability, not just "green-washing." But it is also about the elements needed to commit an organization to any initiative intended to transform the organization and to survive the resulting redirection.

The elements are described in five chapters, discussing disruptive innovation, higher purpose, built-in sustainability, mainstream appeal, and a behavioral contract. Although not all companies presented in *Green Giants* are discussed in each of these chapters, there are some good examples of how companies made the commitment to becoming more sustainable and to both survive and thrive as a result.

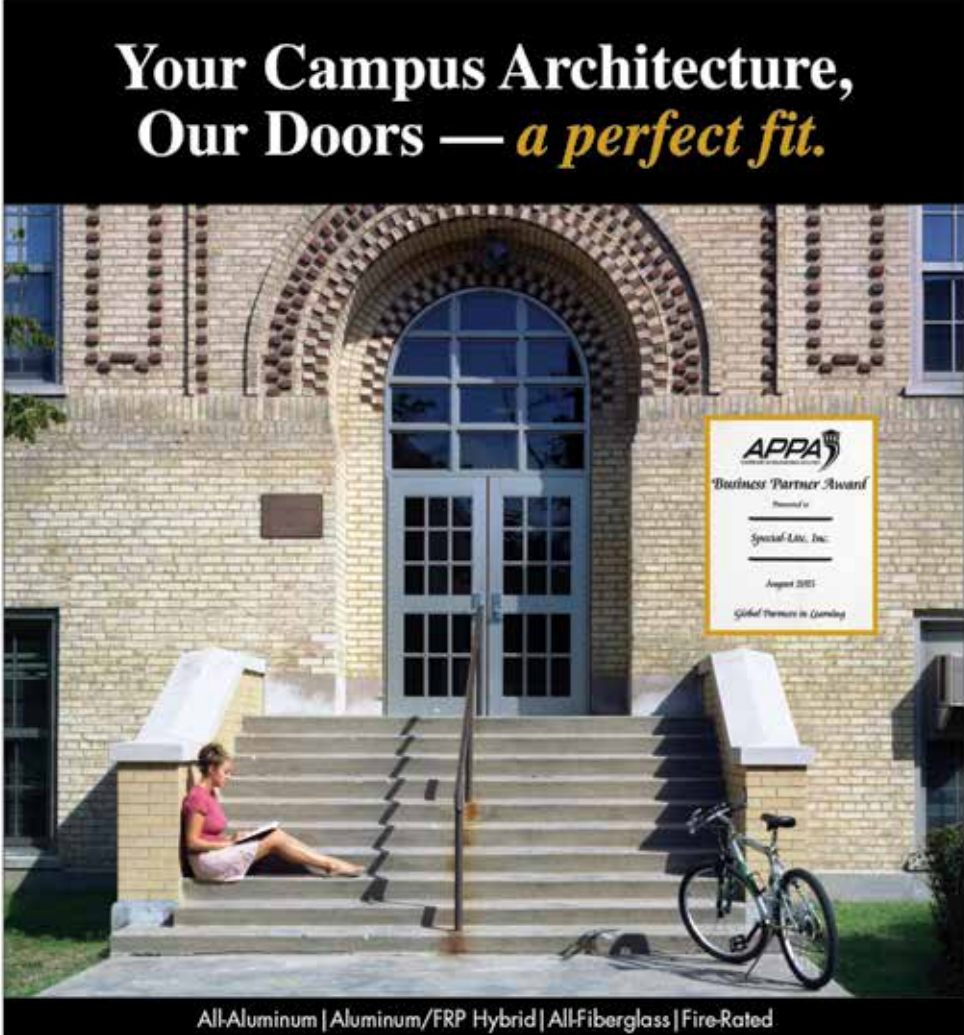
It's possible to read *Green Giants* while ignoring the sustainability focus and to simply study how these companies maintained or increased their shareholder value. However, that's not why *Green Giants* is meaningful for education facilities. The challenges associated with becoming more sustainable when it is not an organization's primary product are real and formidable.

Green Giants describes the focus and leadership needed to make this transition and to simultaneously address your primary mission. Fundamentally, it's about developing a strategic plan, committing to that plan, measuring the progress of the plan, and valid points to

make strategic corrections.

If you're committed to sustainability, *Green Giants* helps identify what works and what may be needed to achieve your goals. If you're not committed to sustainability, it demonstrates how strategic planning and focus can help achieve a difficult goal. 

Ted Weidner is an associate professor at Purdue University and consults on facilities management issues primarily for educational organizations. He can be reached at tjweidne@purdue.edu. If you would like to write a book review, please contact Ted directly.




**Your Campus Architecture,
Our Doors — *a perfect fit.***

All-Aluminum | Aluminum/FRP Hybrid | All-Fiberglass | Fire-Rated

Monumental Stile and Rail Door

Special-Lite® SL-14 and SL-15 Doors and Framing are custom fabricated to match historical architecture as well as new construction and design. Special-Lite Doors require less maintenance and last longer even in challenging applications.

Custom design solutions — combined with state-of-the-art engineering.

 **Special-Lite®**

www.special-lite.com • 800.821.6531 • info@special-lite.com