

## Navigator<sup>®</sup> SMID Cap Core U.S. Equity

### Portfolio Manager



**Tony Soslow, CFA<sup>®</sup>**  
Co-Head of Equity

#### Top Contributors as of June 30, 2023

Company Name	Avg. Weight (%)	Contribution to Return (%)
Axcelis Technologies, Inc.	3.35	1.26
Photronics, Inc.	2.21	1.22
Owens Corning	2.30	0.76

#### Top Detractors as of June 30, 2023

Company Name	Avg. Weight (%)	Contribution to Return (%)
Federated Hermes, Inc. Class B	1.76	-0.41
Catalyst Pharmaceuticals, Inc.	1.26	-0.37
Acuity Brands, Inc.	1.41	-0.25

Source: Factset. For illustrative purposes only. Past performance does not guarantee future results. The holdings identified do not represent all of the securities purchased, sold or recommended for advisory clients. In the chart above, "weight" is the average percentage weight of the holding during the period, and "contribution" is the contribution to overall performance during the period. To obtain the calculation methodology and a list showing every holding's contribution to the overall composite during the period and the last 12 months, contact: PortfolioAnalytics@ccmg.com.

## Bull Market Defies Recession Absence

### Market Review

Sometimes, we focus on the trees and forget about the forest. As we wait for reported GDP growth to turn negative after 14 consecutive months of declining Leading Economic Indicators, we blindly ignore that broad U.S. equity indices has climbed higher – forcing us to characterize the current 24+% advance in the Russell 3000 as a bull market, which began on October 12, 2022. This is a strange confluence of events as it's rare for a new bull market to begin PRIOR to the start of the recession that the prior bear market anticipated.

Bears cry "foul" as the current advance lacks market breadth and is concentrated in the big growth companies, which we believe has benefitted from both profit margin efficiency and renewed demand. While the Russell Large Cap Value and the Russell 2000 Small Cap indices have, in fact, failed to eclipse the defining 20% standard, their 6.6% and 8.1% gains in June tease that the large-cap led bull market is broadening out to a wider swath of companies.

Just as rising inflation pressured tighter Fed policy in 2022, declining inflation has provided opportunity for the Fed to pause and reflect on the impact on their 14-month/5% tightening regime. Milton Friedman's often repeated, "...monetary policy works with long and variable lags..." serves as a cautionary and opaque backdrop for monetary decision making. The big lift in rates should, theoretically, slow economic growth and suppress inflation; however, we just don't know when and by how much.

The post-pandemic recovery just rolls along as sector-specific recessions (Housing, big ticket Consumer, Semiconductors, Technology, etc.) never gain enough momentum to push overall GDP negative and ultimately, transitions to sector-specific recoveries that keep GDP healthy.

We believe tightening policy and supply chain normalization have pushed nearly all broad measures of inflation lower. Core Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) has declined down to 4.6% and softening goods and housing components of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) should push that metric below 4% for the foreseeable future. Sadly, it appears that the Fed's patience will be short-lived as 0.50% of additional hikes are expected before we can conclude if the accumulated 5% tightening in a 4% inflation environment is "sufficiently restrictive" to suppress wage strength and push Core PCE closer to the Fed's 2% objective.

### Second Quarter Portfolio Highlights

- Navigator<sup>®</sup> SMID Cap is positioned with approximately 59.9% of the portfolio in mid-cap stocks with the balance in small-cap stocks and cash.
- As rolling recessionary conditions with sticky services inflation continues to push earnings estimates lower for a growing portion of the investing universe, we continue to balance the portfolio between what we believe are high quality, undervalued companies with improving business momentum and those highly antifragile, undervalued companies that we believe will survive their current earnings downturn and thrive during the next economic recovery.
- Financials, Healthcare, Industrials, and Information Technology represent our largest sector weights, each greater than 11%.

*Past performance is not indicative of future results.*

*This is not a recommendation to buy or sell a particular security. Please see attached disclosures.*



- Our positioning in Information Technology and Industrials helped relative performance while our positioning in Health Care and Consumer Discretionary acted as a drag.
- During the quarter, to benefit from improving business fundamentals, the three most recent additions to the portfolio were Core & Main Inc., Host Hotels & Resorts Inc., and Integer Holdings Corp. The three most recent exits were Voya Financial Inc., Shoe Carnival Inc., and Henry Schein Inc.
- The top three contributors to absolute portfolio return in the quarter were Axcelis Technologies Inc., Photonics Inc., and Owens Corning. The top three detractors to absolute portfolio return in the quarter were Federated Hermes Inc., Catalyst Pharmaceuticals Inc., and Acuity Brands Inc.

## Positioning and Outlook

Positioning in the second quarter focused primarily on removing underperforming companies across various sectors and replacing each with what we believe to be undervalued, high-quality companies with improving business momentum. A sharply inverted yield curve continues to threaten bank business models and as intermediate-term U.S. Treasuries approach 4%, our concern shifts back to what we consider to be lesser quality companies that are dependent on financing.

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The securities of small and mid-cap companies may be subject to more abrupt or erratic market movements and may have lower trading volumes than larger, more established companies

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While many sub-sectors have experienced recessions and have adjusted their business models for their new realities, others like some Consumer Discretionary and Consumer Staples companies are beginning to experience less demand without a corresponding decline in expenses. Less demand is also appearing in some of the more cyclical sectors of the economy just as Technology is rebounding from and expected demand trough.

While forward large-cap growth earnings appeared to have bottomed and are gathering momentum, there are now signs that either renewed demand and/or corporate efficiency is starting to roll into mid and small-cap earnings as well. Starting from a more advantageous point, we expect second half performance to potentially shift to these companies as they have a chance to benefit from both earnings gains and multiple expansion.

The Russell 3000 Index is a capitalization-weighted stock market index that seeks to be a benchmark of the entire U.S. stock market.

The Russell 1000 Value Index measures the performance of the large-cap value segment of the U.S. equity universe.

The Russell 2000 index is a market index comprised of 2,000 small-cap companies.

A Leading Economic Indicator is a measurable set of data that may help to forecast future economic activity.

The U.S. Treasury index is based on the recent auctions of U.S. Treasury bills. Occasionally it is based on the U.S. Treasury's daily yield curve.

The Core Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) Price Index measures the changes in the price of goods and services purchased by consumers for the purpose of consumption, excluding food and energy.

A consumer price index (CPI) is a price index, the price of a weighted average market basket of consumer goods and services purchased by households.

Gross domestic product (GDP) is a monetary measure of the market value of all the final goods and services produced in a specific time period by a country or countries.

Antifragile companies are those which possess a large majority of strong balance sheet, income statement and other metrics such as debt-to-equity, gross margins, earnings variability - which have shown to demonstrate less stock price volatility on a going forward basis. Companies with poor credit metrics, high financial and operating leverage high historically been more fragile to adverse changes in economic and earnings conditions.

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