

2021 Virtual Research Symposium

January 29, 2021 (All times U.S. EST)

11:00 - 11:15 Welcome & Research Update [\[Event Recording\]](#)

Greg Brown, *UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School* [\[Presentation\]](#)

PivotalPath Partnership and Overview

Jon Caplis, CEO, *PivotalPath, Inc.*

11:15 – 12:30 **Session I: The Role of Alternative Investments in Institutional Portfolios**

Allocations to alternative investments continue to increase in institutional portfolios, but empirical evidence provides conflicting views on their value in portfolios. For example, some evidence suggests hedge funds have performed poorly over the last decade whereas other research suggests true superior performance once accounting for missing data in commercial indices. Similarly, research provides conflicting evidence on the post-GFC returns from private equity funds. This session explores the past and potential future benefits from alternative investments in diversified portfolios based on the latest research and expert opinions.

Session Chair & Moderator: Greg Brown, *UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School*

Oxford Union-Style Debate:

“This house believes alternative investments improve portfolio Sharpe ratios.”

Speaking in favor: Russ Wermers, *University of Maryland Smith School of Business* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Speaking against: Randy Cohen, *Harvard Business School*

Panel Discussion: What can we reasonably expect from alternative investments?

Bryan Lewis, *CIO, United States Steel Corporation*

Andrew Palmer, *CIO, Maryland State Retirement and Pension System*

12:30 – 12:45 Break

12:45 – 2:00 **Session II: The Increasing Importance of ESG in Portfolio Management**

The growing role of ESG investing forces asset managers to confront a series of difficult questions. Many of the issues are deeply important on moral grounds, but quite costly to address. In addition, many investors now view ESG objectives as downside risk mitigation, but this insurance is not free. So, what are the pecuniary tradeoffs facing investors for actions society values for other reasons? Furthermore, how should these be addressed within fiduciary mandates as opposed to (or in conjunction with) public policy?

Session Chair & Moderator: Christian Lundblad, *UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School*

What are the real costs and benefits of ESG -- and who realizes them?

Laura Starks, *University of Texas, McCombs School of Business*

[\[Presentation\]](#)

Wei Jiang, *Columbia Business School* [\[Presentation\]](#)

Panel Discussion: The practical realities of ESG




John Skjervem, *CEO, Alan D. Biller & Associates, Inc.*





Elizabeth Harnett, *Oxford University Sustainable Finance Programme*

Sponsored By:



Presenters and Panelists

	<p>Gregory Brown is the Director of the Frank H. Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, Research Director of the Institute for Private Capital, and Sarah Graham Kenan Distinguished Scholar of Finance at the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His areas of study include private investment funds, financial risk management, and hedging strategies. Prior to joining UNC Kenan-Flagler, he worked at the Board of Governors of Federal Reserve System in the Division of Research and Statistics. Prof. Brown received a BS in physics and economics from Duke University and a PhD in finance from the University of Texas at Austin.</p>
	<p>Jonathan Caplis serves as PivotalPath’s CEO, responsible for setting the firm’s strategy and overseeing all aspects of the firm’s operations. Mr. Caplis also serves on PivotalPath’s board. In his 10 years of direct hedge fund experience, Mr. Caplis served as co-head of portfolio allocation and risk management at Campbell & Co., a multi-billion dollar systematic hedge fund. He served as a member of the Campbell’s investment committee, and headed up the firm’s specialized recruiting effort. Prior to joining Campbell & Co., Mr. Caplis was co-founder and chief operating officer of Global Domain Partners LLC. He was responsible for running the quantitative research team, the investment process, trading execution, compliance and oversight, and all other operational aspects of the firm. Mr. Caplis is Series 3 licensed and holds a Bachelor of Science in Finance from Washington University in St. Louis.</p>
	<p>Randy Cohen is a Senior Lecturer in the Finance Unit at Harvard Business School. Randy’s main research focus is the interface between the actions of institutional investors and price levels in the stock market. He has studied the differential reactions of institutions and individuals to news about firms and the economy, as well as the effect of institutional trading on stock prices. He also has researched the identification of top investment managers and the prediction of manager performance, as well as studying the market for municipal securities. In addition to his academic work, Cohen has helped to start and grow a number of investment management firms, and has served as a consultant to many others.</p>
	<p>Elizabeth Hartnett leads the Future of Engagement theme at the Oxford Sustainable Finance Programme. She is a post-doctoral researcher with a focus on mainstreaming sustainable finance practices throughout global investment systems. She is a technical advisor to the One Planet Sovereign Wealth Funds providing guidance to SWFs and asset managers controlling \$18trn on the integration of climate change into their investment portfolios. Elizabeth also teaches on Oxford's undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. She is a Stipendiary Lecturer in Human Geography at Jesus College and a Stevens-Barlow Junior Research Fellowship at Regent's Park College. She holds a master's degree with distinction in nature, society and environmental policy, and a doctorate in economic geography; both from the University of Oxford.</p>
	<p>Wei Jiang is Arthur F. Burns Professor of Free and Competitive Enterprise in the Finance and Economics Division, and the Vice Dean (for Curriculum and Instruction) at Columbia Business School. She is also a Scholar-in-Residence at Columbia Law School, a Senior Fellow at the Program on Corporate Governance at Harvard Law School, and a Research Associate of the NBER—Law and Economics. Professor Jiang received her B.A. and M.A. in international economics from Fudan University (China), and Ph.D. in economics from the University of Chicago after which she joined Columbia Business School. She was an investment banking associate at Prudential Securities (Shanghai) before pursuing her Ph.D. degree.</p>

	<p>Bryan Lewis joined U. S. Steel in August 2019 as vice president and chief investment officer. He has executive responsibility for the company’s global investments for both the defined contribution and defined benefit plans, as well as other related programs. Prior to that, he was the Chief Investment Officer of the Pennsylvania State Employees’ Retirement System. Previously, Lewis served as executive director of the \$20 billion Illinois State Universities Retirement System, where he led fund administration and investment management for two defined benefit plans and one defined contribution plan. Previously, Lewis spent six years as manager for the North Carolina Department of State Treasurer working on the state’s retirement systems. He holds a MBA from the University of Miami and a bachelor’s degree in economics from the University of Maryland College Park.</p>
	<p>Christian Lundblad is the Edward M. O’Herron Distinguished Scholar and Professor of Finance and the Associate Dean of the Ph.D. Program at the University of North Carolina’s Kenan-Flagler Business School. He is also the Director of Research at the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise and the Director of the Center for Excellence in Investment Management. His research spans asset pricing, investment management, and international finance, with a specialization in emerging market development. He received a PhD in financial economics and a master’s degree in economics from Duke University and BA from Washington University in St. Louis.</p>
	<p>Andrew Palmer is the Chief Investment Officer for the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System. In this role, he is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the System’s investment division and has overall responsibility for the System’s investment program. Previously he was the Deputy Chief Investment Officer, Director of Fixed Income for the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System. In addition to his role as Director of Fixed Income, he led the construction of a Strategic Lending Portfolio, was a member of the Private Equity and Real Estate Committees and shared in the responsibility for tactical asset allocation and new product development. Mr. Palmer is a member of the University of Maryland, Economics Leadership Council, and the ILPA, has been active in the CFA program and was President of the Washington Association of Money Managers. He received a BA and an MA in Economics from the University of Maryland.</p>
	<p>John Skjervem is principal, CEO and Director of Consulting with Alan Biller and Associates, involved in all aspects of the firm’s activities. Previously, he served as Investment Division Director and CIO for the Oregon State Treasury leading a globally-diversified, financial and real asset investment program, including the State’s \$80+ billion public employees’ retirement fund. Prior to Oregon, he was an Executive VP at Northern Trust holding a variety of portfolio management and leadership positions including CIO for that firm’s wealth management division. Mr. Skjervem is an advisor to the Retirement Board of the Public Employee Retirement System of Idaho (PERSI) and a member of the Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation’s Investment Advisory Group. He received his B.A. in Economics from UC, Santa Barbara, and his M.B.A. in Finance and Statistics from the University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business.</p>
	<p>Laura T. Starks is the Charles E. and Sarah M. Seay Regents Chair in Finance and co-Executive Director of Social Innovation at the University of Texas, McCombs School of Business. Her current research focuses on mutual funds, corporate governance institutional investors and environmental, social and governance investing. She has served on the Boards of Directors of the four national academic finance organizations: the American Finance Association, the Financial Management Association (FMA), the Society of Financial Studies (SFS) and the Western Finance Association (WFA). In addition, she is an independent director for CREF Retirement Accounts and TIAA-CREF Mutual Funds, serves on the Investment Advisory Committee for the Employees Retirement System of Texas, the Board of Governors of the Investment Company Institute, and the Governing Council of the Independent Directors Council.</p>
	<p>Russ Wermers is Bank of America Professor of Finance and Director, Center for Financial Policy at the Smith School of Business, University of Maryland at College Park. His main research interests include studies of the efficiency of securities markets, as well as the role of institutional investors in setting stock prices. In addition, he studies and teaches quantitative equity strategies, and is currently researching microfinance institutions in Thailand. Most notably, his past research has developed new approaches to measuring and attributing the performance of mutual funds, pension funds, and hedge funds, as well as devising winning strategies for investing in these funds.</p>