

William Blair Large Cap Growth Fund Fund Manager Commentary

Market Overview

U.S. equity indices were broadly positive during the fourth quarter. Together with negative returns in the three prior quarters, U.S. equities still ended the year in substantially negative territory as 2022 marked the worst year since 2008 for the S&P 500 Index.

During the first half of the year, the market was largely dominated by elevated inflation and monetary tightening by the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) which broadly pressured equity valuations. Valuation compression associated with higher rates was fairly indiscriminate and, on a relative basis, benefited the least expensive, and in some cases lower quality, equities most. In March, the FOMC implemented the first increase of the target federal funds rate in this cycle. With record-high gasoline prices, elevated mortgage rates, lower asset prices and higher food costs, consumer sentiment weakened, as did other economic data points. At the same time, the labor market and corporate earnings remained resilient.

Mid-year, a brief equity market rally was fueled by optimism that inflation would moderate, requiring fewer rate increases by the Fed. This sentiment faded, along with stock prices, after the Fed reiterated its priority was to tame inflation, potentially at the expense of economic growth.

U.S. equity indices recovered somewhat in the fourth quarter as investors responded positively to moderating inflation. The FOMC continued to act aggressively in the quarter and raised the target federal funds rate by 125 basis points, for a total of 425 basis points in 2022. After rising throughout the year, 10-year Treasury bond yields peaked in late October, offering a reprieve to pressured valuations. U.S. corporate earnings remained resilient, though forward estimates softened, and management commentary generally reflected considerable uncertainty looking ahead.

Fund Performance

The William Blair Large Cap Growth Fund (Class N shares) outperformed its benchmark, the Russell 1000 Growth index, during the fourth quarter. The Large Cap Growth portfolio outperformed the Russell 1000 Growth Index in the fourth quarter, driven by stock-specific dynamics. The largest source of outperformance as compared to our benchmark came from not owning Tesla (Consumer Discretionary) and Apple (Information Technology). As it relates to Tesla, while we share the market's view that electric vehicle penetration is likely to accelerate from here, resulting in better forward industry growth rates than was previously expected, we believe the stock is embedding unrealistic expectations as to Tesla's ultimate market share and margin profile. In the case of Apple, we believe the valuation does not reflect earnings risk related to

Top 10 Holdings¹ as of 12/31/22

<i>Company</i>	<i>% of Fund</i>
Microsoft Corporation	13.0
Mastercard Incorporated	6.4
Alphabet Inc.	6.2
UnitedHealth Group Inc.	5.6
Amazon.com, Inc.	5.6
Costco Wholesale Corp.	4.4
CoStar Group, Inc.	3.9
Apollo Global Management	3.5
Accenture Public Limited Co.	3.4
Zoetis Inc.	3.1
Total Top 10	55.1

macro challenges. Sales of the company's premium priced products are likely to be pressured by the expected slowdown in economic growth. Given the maturity of the high-end smart phone, tablet and PC markets, and the slowing, though solid growth of Apple's services business, we believe the long-term growth and return prospects for our other Information Technology holdings are more attractive. Within the portfolio, our top contributors for the period were Apollo Global Management (Financials) and ABIOMED (Health Care). Apollo reported quarterly earnings upside from better-than-expected results in asset management and retirement services, while Johnson & Johnson acquired medical device company ABIOMED. Other top contributors included Mastercard (Information Technology), Nike (Consumer Discretionary) and Stryker (Health Care). The top detractors for the period included Amazon (Consumer Discretionary) and PayPal Holdings (Information Technology). Amazon reported a larger than expected deceleration in Amazon Web Services (AWS) sales growth and related profit, while PayPal reported mixed quarterly results with weakness in the U.K. and China due to foreign exchange, inflation and lockdowns. Other top detractors included Salesforce (Information Technology), Costco (Consumer Staples) and Palo Alto Networks (Information Technology).

¹Listed holdings are presented to illustrate examples of the securities that the Fund has bought and do not represent all of the Fund's holdings or future investments. Information about the Fund's holdings should not be considered investment advice. There is no guarantee that the Fund will continue to hold any one particular security or stay invested in any one particular sector. Holdings are subject to change at any time and are as of the date shown above. Top ten holdings are shown as a percentage of total net assets.

Outlook

As we look forward to 2023, there are indications that higher quality investments should fare better in the coming year. Investors expect interest rates to continue to rise, albeit at a slower pace than in 2022, assuming inflation continues to moderate. We believe the majority of multiple compression from rising interest rates should already be embedded in stocks. In contrast to 2022, market performance in 2023 will likely be tied more closely to fundamentals than valuation differences.

Given the lagged impact, the effects of interest rate increases will likely have a more meaningful impact on the U.S. economy in 2023. A slowing economy and generally weaker demand relative to this past year may necessitate costs come into equilibrium with slower revenue growth. This implies risk to corporate earnings. Moreover, as an era of near-zero rates ends, capital sources for more speculative equities are likely to diminish, focusing more on near-term fundamentals.

Quality companies, which have the financial independence to continue to invest in their operations and the business model flexibility to adjust quickly in a dynamic environment, have become increasingly attractive investment opportunities against this backdrop. Pricing flexibility, for example, will be critical if inflationary pressures from labor and materials persist and overall demand weakens. This scenario would likely cause pressure on margins and earnings disappointments for the average company. Companies with strong management teams, superior business models and solid financials would be in a better position to navigate such headwinds. In addition, higher quality investments did not materially outperform during the sell-off in 2022, resulting in compelling valuations for these businesses as we look ahead.



INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE (AS OF 12/31/22)

	QTR	YTD	1 Y	3 Y	5 Y	10 Y
Class I (SI: 12/27/99)	4.14%	-32.46%	-32.46%	5.81%	11.19%	14.09%
Class N (SI: 12/27/99)	4.12%	-32.61%	-32.61%	5.55%	10.92%	13.81%
Russell 1000 [®] Growth Index	2.20%	-29.14%	-29.14%	7.79%	10.96%	14.10%

Performance cited represents past performance. Past performance does not guarantee future results and current performance may be lower or higher than the data quoted. Returns shown assume reinvestment of dividends and capital gains. Investment returns and principal will fluctuate with market and economic conditions and you may have a gain or loss when you sell shares. For the most current month-end performance information, please call +1 800 742 7272, or visit our Web site at www.williamblairfunds.com. Class N shares are available to the general public without a sales load. Class I shares are available only to investors who meet certain eligibility requirements.

EXPENSE RATIOS

	Gross Expense	Net Expense
Class I	0.75%	0.65%
Class N	1.05%	0.90%

Expenses shown are as of the most recent prospectus. The Fund's Adviser has contractually agreed to waive fees and/or reimburse expenses to limit fund operating expenses until 4/30/23.

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES

The Fund's returns will vary, and you could lose money by investing in the Fund. The Fund invests most of its assets in equity securities of large cap domestic growth companies where the primary risk is that the value of the equity securities it holds might decrease in response to the activities of those companies or market and economic conditions. Individual securities may not perform as expected or a fund used by the Adviser may fail to produce its intended result. Different investment styles tend to shift in and out of favor depending on market conditions and investor sentiment, and at times when the investment style used by the Adviser for the Fund is out of favor, the Fund may underperform other equity funds that use different investment styles. The Fund invests most of its assets in equity securities of domestic growth companies, including common stocks and other forms of equity investments (e.g., convertible securities). Convertible securities are at risk of being called before intended, which may have an adverse effect on investment objectives. The Fund is not intended to be a complete investment program. The Fund is designed for long-term investors.

The Russell 1000 Growth Index consists of large-capitalization companies with above average price-to-book ratios and forecasted growth rates. The Index is unmanaged, does not incur fees or expenses, and cannot be invested in directly.

This content is for informational and educational purposes only and not intended as investment advice or a recommendation to buy or sell any security. Investment advice and recommendations can be provided only after careful consideration of an investor's objectives, guidelines, and restrictions.

Please carefully consider the Fund's investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses before investing. This and other information is contained in the Fund's prospectus and summary prospectus, which you may obtain by calling +1 800 742 7272. Read the prospectus and summary prospectus carefully before investing. Investing includes the risk of loss.

Distributed by William Blair & Company, L.L.C., member FINRA/SIPC

Copyright © William Blair & Company, L.L.C. "William Blair" is a registered trademark of William Blair & Company, L.L.C.

NOT FDIC INSURED | NO BANK GUARANTEE | MAY LOSE VALUE