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Market Observations – February 2018 Recap

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After storming out of the gates in January, volatility kicked in during February after a report that wage growth came in stronger than expected. This triggered inflationary fears, which brought the equity markets down and caused Treasury yields to increase. The VIX spiked from 9.77 where it began the month to 37.32 on February 5th. The drawdown approached 10% in the first week of February but was cut short as buyers entered the market. The S&P 500 finished the month with a return of -3.7%. The 10-Year Treasury began the month yielding 2.72%. It went as high as 2.94% on February 21st before ending the month at 2.85%.

The S&P 500 was led by the Information Technology sector, which finished the month about where it started, with a return of 0.1%. Energy stocks took the biggest hit, as they did not participate in the rebound, finishing the month down 10.8%. Small cap stocks, which tend to be higher beta than large cap stocks, were down -3.7%, down in line with the S&P 500. Outside the US both international developed and emerging market equities were down more than the S&P 500. The MSCI EAFE index was down 4.3% for the month while the MSCI EM index was down 4.6%. All eyes are on the Federal Reserve. Investors seem to be worried that higher than expected inflation could case an additional rate hike in 2018.

Below is a summary of what occurred in the markets globally during the month of February.

US Equity Summary:

- The S&P 500 was down 3.7% for the month. All market cap segments and styles ended the month with negative returns. Growth stocks continued to outperform value stocks and large cap stocks outperformed small cap stocks.
- Information Technology was the only sector to not post a negative return as it was up a modest 0.1%. Financials and Consumer Discretionary were the only other sectors to out perform the S&P 500 with returns of -2.8% and -3.5%, respectively.
- Energy, Consumer Staples and Telecom were the bottom three performing sectors with returns of -10.8%, -7.8%, and -7.15, respectively.
- Amazon, Microsoft, Apple and Netflix showed their resiliency as they were the top contributing stocks amid the higher volatility in February.
- Based on JPMorgan factors, Momentum (both Price and Earnings) as well as Growth were the top performing factors. Value and Quality (including low Beta) were the weakest performing factors.

Developed and Emerging Market Equity Summary:

- The MSCI EAFE Index was down 4.5% for the month, while the MSCI EM Index returned -4.6%. Small cap stocks outperformed large Cap stocks in both developed and emerging markets.
- All sectors posted negative returns in developed markets. Information Technology, Consumer Discretionary and Health Care were the top performing sectors. Energy, Materials and Utilities were the weakest performing sectors.
- Momentum (both Price and Earnings) was the best performing factor in developed markets. Beta, Volatility and Value were the weakest.
- Within emerging markets Health Care, Energy and Utilities were the top performing sectors. Real Estate, Industrials and Telecom were the weakest performing. From a factor perspective Value and Size were the top performing factors while Beta and Growth were the weakest.
- The Far East and Pacific regions held up best amid the volatility as Japan was only down 1.5% and Australia was down 3.5%. Europe, and the EU in particular, was the weakest performing region with a 5.9% return for the month.
- Within emerging markets, the EMEA region was only down 1.8% for the month followed by Eastern Europe’s return of 2.5%. Emerging Asia was the weakest performing region within emerging markets. Frontier markets outperformed the broad emerging markets for the month, as the MSCI Frontier Emerging Markets index posted a February return of -2.9%.

Fixed Income Summary:

- The Treasury yield curve steepening continued at the long end in February. The 10-year Treasury finished the month yielding 2.85% after beginning the month at 2.72%. The steepening of the long end is primarily due to inflation concerns creeping into expectations.
- While the Bloomberg Barclays US Treasury index was down 0.8%, long-dated Treasuries (20+ years) were down 3.1%, hurt by rising inflation expectations.
- Within corporate credit, investment grade underperformed high yield corporates, posting a -1.6 return. Within high yield, lower quality high yield outperformed as corporate fundamentals remain strong for the time being.
- Leveraged loan performance was a slight positive for the month, meeting the expectation of performing well when rates rise.
- High yield municipal bonds were the best performing segment, outperforming investment grade municipal bonds.
- Despite some support from a stronger Japanese yen, developed market bonds were negatively impacted by broad declines in foreign currency, as the Citigroup WGBI Index declined -0.68% for month. Emerging markets also suffered from additional commodity price volatility, with the JPMorgan EMBI Global Diversified declining 1.99% in February.

Disclosures

Indices are unmanaged and presented for comparison purposes only. Please note that the returns displayed for indices do not take into account any of the costs associated with buying and selling individual securities. Individuals cannot invest directly in an index.

Bloomberg Barclays US Corporate High Yield TR USD: *Bloomberg Barclays US Corporate High Yield TR USD*

Bloomberg Barclays US Treasury 1-3 Yr TR USD: *The Bloomberg Barclays Capital US Treasury Bond 1-3yr term index measures the performance of short-term government bonds issued by the US Treasury.*

Bloomberg Barclays US Treasury 10 Yr USD: The index *measures the performance of government bonds issued by the US Treasury.*

Bloomberg Barclays US Treasury 20+ Yr TR USD: *The Index is market capitalization weighted and includes all of the securities that meet the Index criteria. The index includes all publicly issued, U.S. Treasury securities that have a remaining maturity greater than 20 years, are non-convertible, are denominated in U.S. dollars, are rated investment grade (Baa3 or better) by Moody's Investors Service, are fixed rate, and have more than $150 million par outstanding. Excluded from the Index are certain special issues, such as flower bonds, targeted investor notes (TINs) and state and local government series bonds (SLGs), and coupon issues that have been stripped from assets already included.*

Bloomberg Barclays US Aggregate Bond Index: *The U.S. Aggregate Index covers the USD-denominated, investment-grade, fixed-rate, taxable bond market of SEC-registered securities. The Index includes bonds from the Treasury, Government-Related, Corporate, MBS (agency fixed-rate and hybrid ARM pass throughs), ABS, and CMBS sectors. The U.S. Aggregate Index is a component of the U.S. Universal Index in its entirety.*

MSCI EM Index: *The MSCI Emerging Markets Index captures large and mid cap representation across 23 Emerging Markets (EM) countries. With 822 constituents, the index covers approximately 85% of the free float-adjusted market capitalization in each country*

MSCI EAFE Index: *The MSCI EAFE Index is recognized as the pre-eminent benchmark in the United States to measure international equity performance. It comprises the MSCI country indices that represent developed markets outside of North America: Europe, Australasia and the Far East.*

S&P 500 Index: *The S&P 500 Index consists of 500 stocks chosen for market size, liquidity, and industry group representation. It is a market value weighted Index (stock price times number of shares outstanding), with each stock's weight in the Index proportionate to its market value. The Index is one of the most widely used benchmarks of US Equity Large Cap performance.*

Alerian MLP Index: *The Alerian MLP Index is the leading gauge of energy Master Limited Partnerships (MLPs). The float-adjusted, capitalization-weighted index, whose constituents represent approximately 85% of total float-adjusted market capitalization, is disseminated real-time on a price-return basis (AMZ) and on a total-return basis (AMZX).*

J.P. Morgan Factor Definitions

Yield: *Stocks are ranked by trailing 12 month dividend yield. Positive factor performance indicates that the highest yielding stocks outperformed the lowest yielding stocks (as well as those stocks that did not pay any dividends) in the universe.*

Size: *Stocks are ranked by their month end market cap. A negative Size factor return would indicate that smaller cap stocks generally outperformed larger cap stocks.*

Quality: *Combines ROE and Earnings Risk (inverted such that stocks with tightest forecasts are rewarded with a higher score).*

Price Momentum: *The 12 Month Price Momentum factor is calculated by ranking stocks by their total return over the previous 12 months.*

Earnings Momentum: *This factor ranks stocks by their forward earnings momentum (1Mth + 3 Mth). For each stock, the change in FY1 earnings over the last month and the last 3 months, and the change in FY2 earnings over the last month and the last 3 months are calculated. A 3-month revision number and a 1-month revision number is calculated by taking the average of the change in FY1 and FY2. A composite value as the average of the 1 month and 3 month values is then calculated.*

Book-to-Price: *Stocks are ranked by their 12 month trailing Book/Market ratio with the cheapest stocks exhibiting the lowest ratio. A positive factor return indicates that stocks with a lower book-to-price ratio outperformed higher book-to-price stocks in the universe.*

Beta: *Beta for the stock relative to its local benchmark index. Note this is a fundamental beta not a calculated Beta.*

USD: United States Dollar.
EURO: The official currency of the Eurozone.
CAD: The official currency of Canada.
AUD: The official currency of Australia.
BRL: The official currency of Brazil.
CHF: The official currency of Switzerland.
JPY: The official currency of Japan.
INR: The official currency of India.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI): *West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil is the underlying commodity of the New York Mercantile Exchange's oil futures contracts. The success of an investment program may be affected by general economic and market conditions, such as interest rates, availability of credit, inflation rates, economic uncertainty, changes in laws and national and international political circumstances. These factors may affect the level and volatility of securities prices and the liquidity of a portfolio's investments. Unexpected volatility or illiquidity could result in losses.*

Investing in securities is speculative and entails risk. There can be no assurance that one's investment objectives will be achieved or that an investment strategy will be successful. Significant losses could result if a strategy involves the use leverage, short sales and derivative transactions, investment in foreign or illiquid securities, and potentially limited diversification.

The opinions expressed herein can change anytime without notice.

Any forward looking statements are not guaranteed and can be affected by inaccurate assumptions or by known or unknown risks and uncertainties. Given these uncertainties, you should not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements.

Special Risks of Foreign Securities
Investments in foreign securities are affected by risk factors generally not thought to be present in the US. The factors include, but are not limited to, the following: less public information about issuers of foreign securities and less governmental regulation and supervision over the issuance and trading of securities.

Special Risks of Master Limited Partnerships
Master limited partnerships (MLPs) are publicly listed securities that trade much like a stock, but they are taxed as partnerships. MLPs are typically concentrated investments in assets such as oil, timber, gold and real estate. The risks of MLPs include concentration risk, illiquidity, and exposure to potential volatility, tax reporting complexity, fiscal policy and market risk. MLPs are not suitable for all investors.

Special Risks of Small Market Capitalization Securities
Investments in companies with smaller market capitalization are generally riskier than investments in larger, well-established companies. Smaller companies often are more recently formed than larger companies and may have limited product lines, distribution channels and financial and managerial resources. These companies may not be well known to the investing public, may not have significant institutional ownership and may have cyclical, static or moderate growth prospects. There is often less publicly available information about these companies than there is for larger, more established issuers, making it more difficult for the Investment Manager to analyze that value of the company. The equity securities of small and mid capitalization companies are often traded over-the-counter or on regional exchanges and may not be traded in the volume typical for securities that are traded on a national securities exchange. Consequently, the Investment Manager may be required to sell these securities over a longer period of time (and potentially at less favorable prices) than would be the case for securities of larger companies. In addition, the prices of the securities of small and mid capitalization companies may be more volatile that those of larger companies.

Special Risks of Fixed Income Securities
For fixed income securities, there is a risk that the price of these securities will go down as interest rates rise. Another risk of fixed income securities is credit risk, which is the risk that an issuer of a bond will not be able to make principal and interest payments on time.

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