

**Form ADV Part 2A Appendix 1 – Wrap Fee Program Brochure  
Item 1: Cover Page  
September 2014**

**Gradient Capital Wrap Program**

**Sponsored By:**

**Gradient Capital Advisors, LLC  
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Chief Compliance Officer**

This brochure provides information about the qualifications and business practices of Gradient Capital Advisors, LLC. If you have any questions about the contents of this brochure, please contact us by telephone at (619) 255-0700 or email [tsagawa@gradientcapital.com](mailto:tsagawa@gradientcapital.com). The information in this brochure has not been approved or verified by the United States Securities and Exchange Commission or by any State Securities Authority.

Additional information about Gradient Capital Advisors, LLC also is available on the SEC's website at [www.adviserinfo.sec.gov](http://www.adviserinfo.sec.gov).

Please note that the use of the term "registered investment adviser" and description of Gradient Capital Advisors, LLC and/or our associates as "registered" does not imply a certain level of skill or training. You are encouraged to review this Brochure and Brochure Supplements for our firm's associates who advise you for more information on the qualifications of our firm and our employees.

## **Item 2: Material Changes**

Gradient Capital Advisors, LLC is required to advise you of any material changes to our Wrap Fee Program Brochure ("Wrap Brochure") from our last annual update. Since the inception of our firm the following material changes have taken place:

- As of May 2014 we have changed from monthly to quarterly billing.

### Item 3: Table of Contents

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## Item 4: Services, Fees & Compensation

- A. Description of our services, including the types of portfolio management services, provided under each program. We must indicate the wrap fee charged for each program, or, if fees vary according to a schedule, provide such schedule. Further, we are required to indicate whether fees are negotiable and identify the portion of the total fee, or range of fees, paid to portfolio managers.

We offer wrap fee programs as described in this Wrap Fee Program Brochure. Our wrap fee accounts are managed on an individualized basis according to the client's investment objectives, financial goals, risk tolerance, etc.

(i) Wrap Comprehensive Portfolio Management:

Our comprehensive portfolio management service encompasses asset management as well as providing financial planning/financial consulting to clients. It is designed to assist clients in meeting their financial goals through the use of financial investments. We conduct at least one, but sometimes more than one meeting (in person if possible, otherwise via telephone conference) with clients in order to understand their current financial situation, existing resources, financial goals, and tolerance for risk. Based on what we learn, we propose an investment approach to the client. We may propose an investment portfolio, consisting of exchange traded funds, mutual funds, individual stocks or bonds, or other securities. Upon the client's agreement to the proposed investment plan, we work with the client to establish or transfer investment accounts so that we can manage the client's portfolio. Once the relevant accounts are under our management, we review such accounts on a regular basis and at least quarterly. We may periodically rebalance or adjust client accounts under our management. If the client experiences any significant changes to his/her financial or personal circumstances, the client must notify us so that we can consider such information in managing the client's investments.

Our firm reimburses clients for charges relating to errors on deposits or withdrawals, stop payment orders, unexpected wire transfers and other nominal fees deducted from their accounts.

Clients with alternative investments are billed an additional fee of \$12.50 per quarter by Schwab; our firm reimburses client accounts for any fees deducted for holding alternative investments.

**Fee Schedule:**

The maximum fee that may be charged for assets under management is 1.50%. The ultimate fee is based on the scope of the engagement and the complexity of the client's circumstance. The asset management fees will be listed on Schedule A of the client agreement. Our firm's fees are billed on a pro-rata annualized basis monthly in arrears based on the time-weighted daily average value of your account during the previous month. Our fees are generally negotiable. Fees will generally be automatically deducted from your managed account\*.

As part of this process, you understand and acknowledge the following:

- a) Your independent custodian sends statements at least quarterly to you showing the market values for each security included in the Assets and all disbursements in your account including the amount of the advisory fees paid to us;
- b) You provide authorization permitting us to be directly paid by these terms;
- c) If we send a copy of our invoice to you, we send a copy of our invoice to the independent custodian at the same time we send the invoice to you;
- d) If we send a copy of our invoice to you, our invoice includes a legend as required by paragraph (a)(2) of Rule 206(4)-2 under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940.\*\*

\*In rare cases, we will agree to direct bill clients.

\*\*The legend urges the client to compare information provided in their statements with those from the qualified custodian in account opening notices and subsequent statements sent to the client for whom the adviser opens custodial accounts with the qualified custodian.

- B. Explanation that a wrap fee program may cost you more or less than purchasing such services separately and description of the factors that bear upon the relative cost of the program, such as the cost of the services if provided separately and the trading activity in your account(s).

A wrap fee program allows our clients to pay a specified fee for investment advisory services and the execution of transactions. The advisory services may include portfolio management, and the fee is not based directly upon transactions in your account. Your fee is bundled with our costs for executing transactions in your account(s). This results in a higher advisory fee to you. We do not charge our clients higher advisory fees based on their trading activity, but you should be aware that we may have an incentive to limit our trading activities in your account(s) because we are charged for executed trades. By participating in a wrap fee program, you may end up paying more or less than you would through a non-wrap fee program where a lower advisory fee is charged, but trade execution costs are passed directly through to you by the executing broker.

- C. Description of any fees that you may pay in addition to a wrap fee, and description of the circumstances under which you may pay these fees, including, if applicable, mutual fund expenses and mark-ups, mark-downs, or spreads paid to market makers.

You may pay custodial fees, charges imposed directly by a mutual fund, index fund, or exchange traded fund which shall be disclosed in the fund's prospectus (i.e., fund management fees and other fund expenses), mark-ups and mark-downs, spreads paid to market makers, wire transfer fees and other fees and taxes on brokerage accounts and securities transactions. These fees are not included within the wrap-fee you are charged by our firm.

- D. If someone recommending a wrap fee program to you, receives compensation as a result of your participation in the program, we must disclose this fact. Further, we are required to explain, if applicable, that the amount of the compensation may be more than what the person would receive if you participated in our other wrap fee program or paid separately for investment advice, brokerage and other services. Finally, we must explain that someone recommending a wrap fee program may have a financial incentive to recommend the wrap fee program over other programs or services.

We do not recommend or offer the wrap program services of other providers. Our investment advisory representatives receive a portion of the advisory fee that you pay us, either directly as a percentage of your overall fee or as their salary from our firm. In cases where our investment advisory representatives are paid a percentage of your overall advisory fee, this may create an incentive to recommend that you participate in a wrap fee program rather than a non-wrap fee program (where you would pay for trade execution costs) or brokerage account where commissions are charged. This is because, in some cases, we may stand to earn more compensation from advisory fees paid to us through a wrap fee program arrangement if your account is not actively traded.

### **Item 5: Account Requirements & Types of Clients**

There are no requirements to open or maintain an account or otherwise engage us.

Types of clients we typically manage wrap fee accounts on behalf of, include:

- Individuals and High Net-Worth Individuals;
- Trusts, Estates or Charitable Organizations;
- Pension and Profit Sharing Plans;
- Corporations, Limited Liability Companies and/or Other Business Types.

### **Item 6: Portfolio Manager Selection & Evaluation**

- A. Description of how our firm selects and reviews portfolio managers, our basis for recommending or selecting portfolio managers for particular clients, and our criteria for replacing or recommending the replacement of portfolio managers for the program and for particular clients.

Our firm does not utilize outside portfolio managers. All accounts are managed by our in-house professionals.

- B. Disclosure of whether our firm or any related persons act as a portfolio manager for a wrap fee program described in the wrap fee program brochure. We must explain the conflicts of interest that we face because of this arrangement and describe how we address these conflicts of interest. Further, we must disclose whether related person portfolio managers are subject to the same selection and review as the other portfolio managers that participate in the wrap fee program. If they are not, we must describe how we select and review related person portfolio managers.

Our firm and its related persons act as portfolio manager(s) for this wrap fee program. This may create a conflict of interest in that other investment advisory firms may charge the same or lower fees than our firm for similar services. Our related person portfolio managers are not subject to the same selection and review as outside portfolio managers that participate in the wrap fee program. This is because we have chosen not to utilize outside portfolio managers.

- C. If our firm, or any of our supervised persons covered under or investment adviser registration, act as a portfolio manager for a wrap fee program described in the wrap fee program brochure, we must respond to Items 4.B, 4.C, 4.D (Advisory Business), 6 (Performance-Based Fees and Side-By-Side Management), 8.A (Methods of Analysis, Investment Strategies and Risk of Loss) and 17 (Voting Client Securities) of Part 2A of Form ADV (Firm Brochure).

Our firm and supervised persons act as portfolio manager(s) for this wrap fee program.

(1) Advisory Business:

See Item 4 for information about our wrap fee advisory program.

(2) Individual Tailoring of Advice to Clients:

We offer individualized investment advice to clients utilizing our Wrap Comprehensive Portfolio Management service.

(3) Ability of Clients to Impose Restrictions on Investing in Certain Securities or Types of Securities:

Each client has the opportunity to place reasonable restrictions on the types of investments to be held in the portfolio. Restrictions on investments in certain securities or types of securities may not be possible due to the level of difficulty this would entail in managing the account. Restrictions would be limited to our Wrap Comprehensive Portfolio Management service. We do not manage assets through our other services.

(4) Participation in Wrap Fee Programs.

Our wrap fee and non-wrap fee accounts are managed on an individualized basis according to the client's investment objectives, financial goals, risk tolerance, etc. We do not manage wrap fee accounts in a different fashion than non-wrap fee accounts.

(5) Performance-Based Fees & Side-By-Side Management.

We do not charge performance fees to our clients.

(6) Methods of Analysis, Investment Strategies & Risk of Loss

Description of the Methods of Analysis and Investment Strategies We Use In Formulating Investment Advice or Managing Assets

**Methods of Analysis:**

- Charting;
- Cyclical;
- Fundamental;
- Technical.

**Investment Strategies We Use:**

- Long Term Purchases (Securities Held At Least a Year);
- Short Term Purchases (Securities Sold Within a Year);
- Trading (Securities Sold Within 30 Days);
- Short Sales;
- Margin Transactions;
- Option Writing, including Covered Options, Uncovered Options or Spreading Strategies;

**Please Note:**

Investing in securities involves risk of loss that clients should be prepared to bear. While the stock market may increase and your account(s) could enjoy a gain, it is also possible that the stock market may decrease and your account(s) could suffer a loss. It is important that you understand the risks associated with investing in the stock market, are appropriately diversified in your investments, and ask us any questions you may have.

**(7) Voting Client Securities**

- (i) If we have, or will accept, proxy authority to vote client securities, we must briefly describe our voting policies and procedures, including those adopted pursuant to SEC Rule 206(4)-6.

We do not and will not accept the proxy authority to vote client securities. Clients will receive proxies or other solicitations directly from their custodian or a transfer agent. In the event that proxies are sent to our firm, we will forward them on to you and ask the party who sent them to mail them directly to you in the future. Clients may call, write or email us to discuss questions they may have about particular proxy votes or other solicitations.

**Item 7: Client Information Provided to Portfolio Manager(s)**

We are required to describe the information about you that we communicate to your portfolio manager(s), and how often or under what circumstances we provide updated information. Our firm communicates with your portfolio manager(s) on a regular basis as needed (daily, weekly, monthly, etc) to ensure your most current investment goals and objectives are understood by your portfolio manager(s). In most cases, we will communicate such information as part of our regular investment management duties. Nevertheless, we will also communicate information to your portfolio manager(s) when you ask us to, when market or economic conditions make it prudent to do so, etc.

**Item 8: Client Contact with Portfolio Manager(s)**

Clients are always free to directly contact their portfolio manager(s) with any questions or concerns they have about their portfolios or other matters.



## Item 9: Additional Information

- A. We are required to respond to: 1. Item 9 (Disciplinary Information); and 2. Item 10 (Other Financial Industry Activities and Affiliations) of Part 2A of Form ADV.
1. We have determined that our firm and management have no disciplinary information to disclose.
  2. We have the following financial industry activities and affiliations to disclose:
    - a. Representatives of our firm are insurance agents/brokers. They may offer insurance products and receive customary fees as a result of insurance sales. A conflict of interest may arise as these insurance sales may create an incentive to recommend products based on the compensation adviser and/or our supervised persons may earn and may not necessarily be in the best interests of the client.
- B. We are required to respond to: 1. Items 11 (Code of Ethics or Interest in Client Transactions and Personal Trading); 2. Item 13 (review of Accounts); 3. Item 14 (Client Referrals and Other Compensation); and 4. Item 18 (Financial Information) of Part 2A of Form ADV, as applicable to our wrap fee clients.

### 1. Code of Ethics, Participation or Interest in Client Transactions & Personal Trading

Brief description of our Code of Ethics adopted pursuant to SEC rule 204A-1 and offer to provide a copy of our Code of Ethics to any client or prospective client upon request.

We recognize that the personal investment transactions of members and employees of our firm demand the application of a high Code of Ethics and require that all such transactions be carried out in a way that does not endanger the interest of any client. At the same time, we believe that if investment goals are similar for clients and for members and employees of our firm, it is logical and even desirable that there be common ownership of some securities.

Therefore, in order to prevent conflicts of interest, we have in place a set of procedures (including a pre-clearing procedure) with respect to transactions effected by our members, officers and employees for their personal accounts<sup>1</sup>. In order to monitor compliance with our personal trading policy, we have a quarterly securities transaction reporting system for all of our associates.

Furthermore, our firm has established a Code of Ethics which applies to all of our associated persons. An investment adviser is considered a fiduciary. As a fiduciary, it is an investment adviser's responsibility to provide fair and full disclosure of all material facts and to act solely in the best interest of each of our clients at all times. We have a fiduciary duty to all clients. Our fiduciary duty is considered the core underlying principle for our Code of Ethics which also includes Insider Trading and Personal Securities Transactions Policies and Procedures.

<sup>1</sup> For purposes of the policy, our associate's personal account generally includes any account (a) in the name of our associate, his/her spouse, his/her minor children or other dependents residing in the same household, (b) for which our associate is a trustee or executor, or (c) which our associate controls, including our client accounts which our associate controls and/or a member of his/her household has a direct or indirect beneficial interest in.

We require all of our supervised persons to conduct business with the highest level of ethical standards and to comply with all federal and state securities laws at all times. Upon employment or affiliation and at least annually thereafter, all supervised persons will sign an acknowledgement that they have read, understand, and agree to comply with our Code of Ethics. Our firm and supervised persons must conduct business in an honest, ethical, and fair manner and avoid all circumstances that might negatively affect or appear to affect our duty of complete loyalty to all clients. This disclosure is provided to give all clients a summary of our Code of Ethics. However, if a client or a potential client wishes to review our Code of Ethics in its entirety, a copy will be provided promptly upon request.

## **2. Review of Accounts**

- a) Review of client accounts, along with a description of the frequency and nature of our review, and the titles of our employees who conduct the review

We review accounts on at least a quarterly basis for our clients subscribing to our Wrap Comprehensive Portfolio Management service. The nature of these reviews is to learn whether clients' accounts are in line with their investment objectives, appropriately positioned based on market conditions, and investment policies, if applicable. Only our Financial Advisors or Portfolio Managers will conduct reviews.

- b) Review of client accounts on other than a periodic basis, along with a description of the factors that trigger a review.

We may review client accounts more frequently than described above. Among the factors which may trigger an off-cycle review are major market or economic events, the client's life events, requests by the client, etc.

- c) Description of the content and indication of the frequency of written or verbal regular reports we provide to clients regarding their accounts.

We do not provide written reports to clients, unless asked to do so. Verbal reports to clients take place on at least an annual basis when we meet with clients who subscribe to our Comprehensive Portfolio Management service.

## **3. Client Referrals & Other Compensation**

- a) If someone who is not a client provides an economic benefit to our firm for providing investment advice or other advisory services to our clients, we must generally describe the arrangement. For purposes of this Item, economic benefits include any sales awards or other prizes.

We receive an economic benefit from Schwab in the form of the support products and services it makes available to us and other independent investment advisors that have their clients maintain accounts at Schwab.

These products and services, how they benefit us, and the related conflicts of interest are described in Form ADV Part 2A (*see Item 12 – Brokerage Practices*). The availability to us of Schwab's products and services is not based on us giving particular investment advice, such as buying particular securities for our clients.

While we recommend that you use Schwab as custodian/broker, you will decide whether to do so and open your account with Schwab by entering into an account agreement directly with them. We do not open the account for you. Even though your account is maintained at Schwab, we can still use other brokers to execute trades for your account, as described in the next paragraph.

- b) If our firm or a related person directly or indirectly compensates any person who is not our employee for client referrals, we are required to describe the arrangement and the compensation.

We do not pay referral fees (non-commission based) to independent solicitors (non-registered representatives) for the referral of their clients to our firm in accordance with Rule 206 (4)-3 of the Investment Advisers Act of 1940.

#### **4. Financial Information**

We are not required to provide financial information in this Brochure because:

- We do not require the prepayment of more than \$1,200 in fees and six or more months in advance.
- We do not take custody of client funds or securities.
- We do not have a financial condition or commitment that impairs our ability to meet contractual and fiduciary obligations to clients.

We have never been the subject of a bankruptcy proceeding.