

MERLE ADVISORS, LLC

a Registered Investment Adviser

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This brochure provides information about the qualifications and business practices of Merle Advisors, LLC (hereinafter “Merle Advisors” or the “Firm”). If you have any questions about the contents of this brochure, please contact the Firm at the telephone number listed above. The information in this brochure has not been approved or verified by the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) or by any state securities authority. Additional information about the Firm is available on the SEC’s website at www.adviserinfo.sec.gov. The Firm is a registered investment adviser. Registration does not imply any level of skill or training.

Item 2. Material Changes

In this Item, Merle Advisors is required to discuss any material changes that have been made to the brochure since the last annual amendment. There are no such material changes to disclose.

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Item 4. Advisory Business

Merle Advisors offers a variety of advisory services, which include financial planning, consulting, and investment management services. Prior to Merle Advisors rendering any of the foregoing advisory services, clients are required to enter into one or more written agreements with Merle Advisors setting forth the relevant terms and conditions of the advisory relationship (the “Advisory Agreement”).

Merle Advisors filed for registration as an investment adviser in April 2021 and is wholly owned by CNSL Management Enterprises, LLC. As of the date of this filing, Merle Advisors does not have any assets under management; however, the Firm reasonably expects to be eligible for registration with the SEC within 120 days of approval as an investment adviser.

While this brochure generally describes the business of Merle Advisors, certain sections also discuss the activities of its Supervised Persons, which refer to the Firm’s officers, partners, directors (or other persons occupying a similar status or performing similar functions), employees or other persons who provide investment advice on Merle Advisors’s behalf and are subject to the Firm’s supervision or control.

Financial Planning and Consulting Services

Merle Advisors offers clients a broad range of financial planning and consulting services, which include any or all of the following functions:

- Business Planning
- Cash Flow Forecasting
- Trust and Estate Planning
- Financial Reporting
- Investment Consulting
- Retirement Planning
- Risk Management
- Charitable Giving
- Distribution Planning
- Tax Planning
- Education Planning

The financial planning and consulting services are rendered in conjunction with investment portfolio management as part of a comprehensive wealth management engagement (described in more detail below).

In performing these services, Merle Advisors is not required to verify any information received from the client or from the client’s other professionals (e.g., attorneys, accountants, etc.) and is expressly authorized to rely on such information. Merle Advisors recommends certain clients engage the Firm for additional related services, its Supervised Persons in their individual capacities as registered representatives of a broker-dealer and/or other professionals to implement its recommendations. Clients are advised that a conflict of interest exists for the Firm to recommend that clients engage Merle Advisors or its affiliates to provide (or continue to provide) additional services for compensation, including investment management

services. Clients retain absolute discretion over all decisions regarding implementation and are under no obligation to act upon any of the recommendations made by Merle Advisors under a financial planning or consulting engagement. Clients are advised that it remains their responsibility to promptly notify the Firm of any change in their financial situation or investment objectives for the purpose of reviewing, evaluating or revising Merle Advisors's recommendations and/or services.

Wealth Management Services

Merle Advisors provides clients with wealth management services which include a broad range of financial planning and consulting services as well as discretionary and/or non-discretionary management of investment portfolios.

Merle Advisors primarily allocates client assets among various independent investment managers ("Independent Managers"), options, structured notes and other products, exchange-traded funds ("ETFs"), individual debt and equity securities, mutual funds, and privately placed securities (including debt, equity and/or interests in pooled investment vehicles) in accordance with their stated investment objectives.

Where appropriate, the Firm also provides advice about any type of legacy position or other investment held in client portfolios, but clients should not assume that these assets are being continuously monitored or otherwise advised on by the Firm unless specifically agreed upon. Clients can engage Merle Advisors to manage and/or advise on certain investment products that are not maintained at their primary custodian, such as variable life insurance and annuity contracts and assets held in employer sponsored retirement plans and qualified tuition plans (i.e., 529 plans). In these situations, Merle Advisors directs or recommends the allocation of client assets among the various investment options available with the product. These assets are generally maintained at the underwriting insurance company or the custodian designated by the product's provider.

Merle Advisors tailors its advisory services to meet the needs of its individual clients and seeks to ensure, on a continuous basis, that client portfolios are managed in a manner consistent with those needs and objectives. Merle Advisors consults with clients on an initial and ongoing basis to assess their specific risk tolerance, time horizon, liquidity constraints and other related factors relevant to the management of their portfolios. Clients are advised to promptly notify Merle Advisors if there are changes in their financial situation or if they wish to place any limitations on the management of their portfolios. Clients can impose reasonable restrictions or mandates on the management of their accounts if Merle Advisors determines, in its sole discretion, the conditions would not materially impact the performance of a management strategy or prove overly burdensome to the Firm's management efforts.

Use of Independent Managers

As mentioned above, Merle Advisors selects certain Independent Managers to actively manage a portion of certain of its clients' assets. The specific terms and conditions under which a client engages an Independent Manager are set forth in a separate written agreement with the designated Independent Manager. That agreement can be between the Firm and the Independent Manager (often called a subadvisor) or the client and the Independent Manager (sometimes called a separate account manager). In addition to this brochure, clients will typically also receive the written disclosure documents of the respective Independent Managers engaged to manage their assets.

Merle Advisors evaluates a variety of information about Independent Managers, which includes the Independent Managers' public disclosure documents, materials supplied by the Independent Managers themselves and other third-party analyses it believes are reputable. To the extent possible, the Firm seeks to assess the Independent Managers' investment strategies, past performance and risk results in relation to its clients' individual portfolio allocations and risk exposure. Merle Advisors also takes into consideration each Independent Manager's management style, returns, reputation, financial strength, reporting, pricing and research capabilities, among other factors.

Merle Advisors continues to provide services relative to the discretionary or non-discretionary selection of the Independent Managers. On an ongoing basis, the Firm monitors the performance of those accounts being managed by Independent Managers. Merle Advisors seeks to ensure the Independent Managers' strategies and target allocations remain aligned with its clients' investment objectives and overall best interests.

Use of Dynasty Financial Partners, LLC TAMP

Merle Advisors has entered into a contractual relationship with Dynasty Financial Partners, Dynasty Wealth management and its affiliates ("Dynasty"), which provides Merle Advisors with operational and back office support including access to a network of service providers. Through the Dynasty network of service providers, Merle Advisors may receive preferred pricing on trading technology, reporting, custody, brokerage, compliance and other related services. Dynasty works closely with the Firm on the operational and investment set-up to fully understand the Firm's objectives and transition capabilities. Dynasty will initially provide the Firm's chief compliance officer as well as control person in setting up the Firm. Dynasty charges a "Platform Fee," for which, unless otherwise disclosed, the client will be charged, separate from and in addition to such client's annual investment management fee, as described in Item 5 below. In addition, Dynasty's subsidiary, Dynasty Wealth Management, LLC ("DWM") is an SEC registered investment adviser, that provides access to a range of investment services including: separately managed accounts ("SMA"), mutual fund and ETF asset allocation strategies, and unified managed accounts ("UMA") managed by external third party managers (collectively, the "Investment Programs"). Merle Advisors and its clients may separately engage the services of Dynasty and/or its subsidiaries to

access the Investment Programs. Under the SMA and UMA programs, Merle Advisors will maintain the ability to select the specific, underlying third party managers that will, in turn, have day-to-day discretionary trading authority over the requisite client assets.

DWM sponsors an investment management platform (the “Platform” or the “TAMP”) that is available to the advisers in the Dynasty Network, such as Merle Advisors. Through the Platform, DWM and Dynasty collectively provide certain technology, administrative, operations and advisory support services that allow advisers to manage their own portfolios and access independent third-party managers that provide discretionary services in the form of traditional managed accounts and investment models. Advisers can allocate all or a portion of client assets among the different independent third-party managers via the Platform. Advisers may also use the model management feature of the TAMP by creating their own asset allocation model and underlying investments that comprise the model. Through the model management feature, advisers may be able to outsource the implementation of trade orders and periodic rebalancing of the model when needed.

Merle Advisors will maintain the direct contractual relationship with each client and obtain, through such agreements, the authority to engage independent third-party managers, DWM and/or Dynasty, as applicable, for services rendered through the Platform in service of such client. Merle Advisors may delegate discretionary trading authority to DWM and/or independent third-party managers to effect investment and reinvestment of client assets with the ability to buy, sell or otherwise effect investment transactions and allocate client assets. If a client is participating in certain Investment Programs, DWM or the designated manager, as applicable, is also authorized without prior consultation of Merle Advisors or the client to buy, sell, trade or allocate such client’s assets in accordance with the client’s designated portfolio and to deliver instructions to the designated broker-dealer and/or custodian of such client’s assets.

Item 5. Fees and Compensation

Merle Advisors offers services for a fee based upon assets under management. Additionally, certain of the Firm’s Supervised Persons, in their individual capacities, offers securities brokerage services under a separate commission-based arrangement.

Investment Management Fees

Merle Advisors offers investment management services for an annual fee based on the amount of assets under the Firm’s management. This management fee varies between 50 and 150 basis points (0.50% – 1.50%), depending upon the size and composition of a client’s portfolio, type of investment strategies utilized, the type and amount of services rendered and the individual(s) providing the services.

The annual fee is prorated and charged quarterly, in advance, based upon the market value of the assets being managed by Merle Advisors on the last day of the previous quarter. Adjustments will be made for deposits and withdrawals in excess of \$50,000 during the quarter. If the portfolio management agreement is executed at any time other than the first day of a calendar quarter, Merle Advisors's fees will apply on a pro rata basis, which means that the management fee is payable in proportion to the number of days in the quarter for which you are a client. In the event the portfolio management agreement is terminated, the fee for the final billing period will be prorated through the effective date of termination, and the outstanding or unearned portion of the fee will be charged or refunded to the client, as appropriate. The Firm's management fee is negotiable, depending on individual client circumstances.

Additionally, for asset management services the Firm provides with respect to certain client holdings (e.g., held-away assets, accommodation accounts, alternative investments, etc.), Merle Advisors can negotiate a fee rate that differs from the range set forth above. Clients are advised that a conflict of interest exists for the Firm to recommend that clients engage Merle Advisors for additional services for compensation, including rolling over retirement accounts or moving other assets to the Firm's management. Clients retain absolute discretion over all decisions regarding engaging the Firm and are under no obligation to act upon any of the recommendations.

Fee Discretion

Merle Advisors may, in its sole discretion, negotiate to charge a lesser fee based upon certain criteria, such as anticipated future earning capacity, anticipated future additional assets, dollar amount of assets to be managed, related accounts, account composition, pre-existing/legacy client relationship, account retention, pro bono activities, or competitive purposes.

Additional Fees and Expenses

In addition to the advisory fees paid to Merle Advisors, clients also incur certain charges imposed by other third parties, such as broker-dealers, custodians, trust companies, banks and other financial institutions (collectively "Financial Institutions"). These additional charges include securities brokerage commissions, transaction fees, custodial fees, fees attributable to alternative assets, fees charged by the Independent Managers, margin and other borrowing costs, charges imposed directly by a mutual fund or ETF in a client's account, as disclosed in the fund's prospectus (e.g., fund management fees and other fund expenses), deferred sales charges, odd-lot differentials, transfer taxes, wire transfer and electronic fund fees, and other fees and taxes on brokerage accounts and securities transactions. The Firm's brokerage practices are described at length in Item 12, below.

As discussed above, Merle Advisors uses Dynasty's TAMP services. TAMP related charges are not included in the Firm's investment management fee. Clients will be charged, separate from and in addition

to the investment management fee, any applicable Platform Fees as well as applicable Independent Manager fees. Merle Advisors does not receive any portion of the fees paid directly to Dynasty or the service providers made available through its platform, including the Independent Managers.

Each of the Platform Fee and independent manager fees are determined by the particular program(s) and manager(s) with which a client's assets are invested, and are calculated based upon a percentage of the assets under management, as applicable. The Platform Fee generally ranges from 0 - .45% annually, independent fixed income manager fees generally range from 0 - .90% annually, and independent equity manager fees generally range from 0 – 1.50% annually.

Clients will note the total fee reflected on their custodial statement will represent the sum of Merle Advisors's investment management fee, Platform Fee(s) and Independent Manager fee(s), accordingly. Clients should review such statements to determine the total amount of fees associated with their requisite investments, and should review their investment management agreement with Merle Advisors to determine the investment management fee paid to the Firm.

Direct Fee Debit

Clients provide Merle Advisors and/or certain Independent Managers with the authority to directly debit their accounts for payment of the investment advisory fees. The Financial Institutions that act as the qualified custodian for client accounts, from which the Firm retains the authority to directly deduct fees, have agreed to send statements to clients not less than quarterly detailing all account transactions, including any amounts paid to Merle Advisors.

Use of Margin

Merle Advisors can be authorized by clients to use margin and/or other securities-based loans in the management of the client's investment portfolio. In these cases the fee payable will be assessed gross of margin such that the market value of the client's account and corresponding fee payable by the client to Merle Advisors will be increased. Where investment management fees are assessed gross of margin, a conflict of interest exists as the Firm has an incentive to use margin to increase its fees.

Account Additions and Withdrawals

Clients can make additions to and withdrawals from their account at any time, subject to Merle Advisors's right to terminate an account. Additions can be in cash or securities provided that the Firm reserves the right to liquidate any transferred securities or declines to accept particular securities into a client's account. Clients can withdraw account assets on notice to Merle Advisors, subject to the usual and customary securities settlement procedures. However, the Firm designs its portfolios as long-term investments and

the withdrawal of assets may impair the achievement of a client's investment objectives. Merle Advisors may consult with its clients about the options and implications of transferring securities. Clients are advised that when transferred securities are liquidated, they may be subject to transaction fees, short-term redemption fees, fees assessed at the mutual fund level (e.g., contingent deferred sales charges) and/or tax ramifications.

Commissions and Sales Charges for Recommendations of Securities

Clients can engage certain persons associated with Merle Advisors (but not the Firm directly) to render securities brokerage services under a separate commission-based arrangement. Clients are under no obligation to engage such persons and may choose brokers or agents not affiliated with Merle Advisors.

Under this arrangement, the Firm's Supervised Persons, in their individual capacities as registered representatives of Purshe Kaplan Sterling Investments, Inc. ("PKS"), can provide securities brokerage services and implement securities transactions under a separate commission based arrangement. Supervised Persons are entitled to a portion of the brokerage commissions paid to PKS, as well as a share of any ongoing distribution or service (trail) fees from the sale of mutual funds. Merle Advisors can also recommend no-load or load-waived funds, where no sales charges are assessed, but where the Supervised Person receives other forms of compensation. Prior to effecting any transactions, clients are required to enter into a separate account agreement with PKS.

The Firm can execute trades with a broker-dealer other than the client's primary custodian that nonetheless settle at and are held at the client's primary custodian ("trade away transactions"). Trade away transactions can be entered into on behalf of clients that have entered into agreements for prime brokerage clearing services with their custodian. Because clients are not required to execute a separate agreement with the other broker-dealer to enter into trade away transactions, the Firm and its Supervised Persons have discretion in selecting the broker-dealer to use to effect client transactions.

The Firm will use PKS for trade away transactions ("PKS trade away transactions"). As discussed herein, certain of the Firm's Supervised Persons are registered representatives of PKS and will receive transaction-based compensation for the PKS trade away transactions. Various conflicts of interest arise out of the PKS trade away transactions. Among other things, the Firm's Supervised Persons have an incentive to engage in the PKS trade away transactions where the advisory fees that the Supervised Person would otherwise earn for managing such assets is less than the compensation that the Supervised Person would earn by executing the transaction as a registered representative through PKS. Such Supervised Persons also have an incentive to engage in frequent transactions through the PKS trade away transactions arrangement because of the compensation that they can earn as registered representatives of PKS. Frequent trading can increase the transaction costs charged to clients, negatively impact performance results, and have adverse tax consequences for clients. A conflict of interest also exists because the Firm's Supervised Persons have an incentive to recommend PKS to execute trade away transactions on behalf of clients because they can

earn brokerage compensation as registered representatives of PKS (as opposed to other broker-dealers where the Supervised Person would not receive brokerage compensation). Additionally, because trade away transactions are deemed to be unsolicited trades by PKS, PKS does not conduct any suitability reviews with respect to securities acquired through PKS trade away transactions.

The Firm will continue to have a fiduciary duty over the client's advisory assets that are executed through the PKS trade away transactions and has policies and procedures in place to mitigate the impact of the conflicts. In addition, the assets purchased through a PKS trade away transaction will be held in accounts separate, or otherwise tracked separately, from other assets over which the Firm provides management services and charges management fees. The Firm does not charge clients advisory fees on assets acquired through trade away transactions.

In addition, a conflict of interest exists to the extent that a Supervised Person of Merle Advisors recommends the purchase or sale of securities through a brokerage relationship where that Supervised Person receives commissions or other additional compensation as a result of that recommendation (the "Brokerage Relationship"). Because the Supervised Persons receive compensation in connection with the sale of securities in the Brokerage Relationship, a conflict of interest exists as such Supervised Persons, have an incentive to recommend more expensive securities or services to clients where such Supervised Persons earn more compensation with respect to the sale of such securities through the Brokerage Relationship rather than through an advisory relationship with the Firm. The Firm has procedures in place to ensure that any recommendations made by such Supervised Persons to engage in the Brokerage Relationship are in the best interest of that client. Clients should understand that, other than the PKS trade away transactions discussed above, the investments made in the Brokerage Relationship are not receiving advisory services from the Firm. Therefore, the Firm does not have a fiduciary duty over the Brokerage Relationship recommendations.

Retirement Account Rollover Considerations

As part of Merle Advisors' investment advisory services, the Firm can recommend that clients withdraw the assets from their the retirement plans they are invested in and roll the assets over to an individual retirement account ("IRA") that the Firm will manage. If clients elect to roll the assets to an IRA that is subject to the Firm's management, the Firm will charge an asset-based fee as set forth in the executed Advisory Agreement. This practice presents a conflict of interest because persons providing investment advice on the Firm's behalf have an incentive to recommend a rollover to clients for the purpose of generating fee-based compensation rather than solely based on the client's needs. Clients are under no obligation, contractually or otherwise, to complete the rollover. Moreover, if the client does complete the rollover, the client is under no obligation to have the assets in an IRA managed by the Firm.

Many employers permit former employees to keep their retirement assets in their company plan. Also, current employees can sometimes move assets out of their company plan before they retire or change jobs.

In determining whether to complete the rollover to an IRA, and to the extent the following options are available, clients should consider the costs and benefits of:

- Leaving the funds in the current plan.
- Moving the funds to a new employer's retirement plan.
- Cashing out and taking a taxable distribution from the plan.
- Rolling the funds into an IRA rollover account.

Each of these options has advantages and disadvantages and before making a change the Firm encourages clients to speak with their CPA and/or tax attorney. If the client is considering rolling over their retirement funds to an IRA for the Firm to manage, here are a few points to consider before doing so:

- Determine whether the investment options in the employer's retirement plan address the client's needs or whether the client might want to consider other types of investments.
 - Employer retirement plans generally have a more limited investment menu than IRAs.
 - Employer retirement plans may have unique investment options not available to the public such as employer securities, or previously closed funds.
- The current plan may have lower fees than the Firm's fees.
 - If interested in investing only in mutual funds, the client should understand the cost structure of the share classes available in the employer's retirement plan and how the costs of those share classes compare with those available in an IRA.
 - Clients should understand the various products and services they might take advantage of at an IRA provider and the potential costs of those products and services.
- The Firm's strategy may have higher risk than the option(s) provided to you in the client's plan.
- The client's current plan may also offer financial advice.
- If clients keep their assets titled in a 401k or retirement account, the client could potentially delay their required minimum distribution beyond age 72.
- The client's 401k may offer more liability protection than a rollover IRA; each state may vary. Generally, federal law protects assets in qualified plans from creditors. Since 2005, IRA assets have been generally protected from creditors in bankruptcies. However, there can be some exceptions to the general rules so clients should consult with an attorney if they are concerned about protecting their retirement plan assets from creditors.

- Clients may be able to take out a loan on their 401k, but not from an IRA.
- IRA assets can be accessed any time; however, distributions are subject to ordinary income tax and may also be subject to a 10% early distribution penalty unless they qualify for an exception such as disability, higher education expenses or the purchase of a home.
- If clients own company stock in their plan, they may be able to liquidate those shares at a lower capital gains tax rate.
- The client's plan may allow them to hire the Firm as the manager and keep the assets titled in the plan name.

It is important that clients understand the differences between these types of accounts and to decide whether a rollover is best for them. Prior to proceeding, if clients have questions they should contact their investment adviser representative, or call the Firm's main number as listed on the cover page of this brochure.

Item 6. Performance-Based Fees and Side-by-Side Management

Merle Advisors does not provide any services for a performance-based fee (i.e., a fee based on a share of capital gains or capital appreciation of a client's assets)

Item 7. Types of Clients

Merle Advisors offers services to individuals, trusts, estates, corporations and other business entities.

Item 8. Methods of Analysis, Investment Strategies and Risk of Loss

Methods of Analysis and Investment Strategies

Merle Advisors works with each client to create a comprehensive financial plan that is suitable for their needs. The Firm's analysis is rooted in the study of Modern Portfolio Theory. Harry Markowitz pioneered this theory and was ultimately awarded the Nobel Prize for his work. Depending on a client's risk parameters (age, timeframe for investing, risk tolerance, amount of assets both liquid and illiquid, financial goals), Merle Advisors strives to enhance a client's return while minimizing their risk by investing in multiple asset classes. When formulating what investment solutions the Firm will advise for a client, Merle Advisors utilizes quantitative and qualitative analysis methods.

While each client's needs are unique, Merle Advisors believes that a diverse asset allocation model is prudent. The Firm utilizes stocks, bonds, separately managed accounts, mutual funds, ETFs, private investments, hedge funds, options, alternative investments and structured notes for clients. Merle Advisors's team has extensive expertise in structured notes, also known as outcome based investing, which the Firm believes allows clients to take equity-like risk with downside protection.

When utilizing Independent Managers, Merle Advisors works with Dynasty Financial Partners for sourcing and conducting initial and ongoing due diligence on the Independent Managers. Merle Advisors has an Investment Committee, which is comprised of both members who are employees of the Firm as well as members who are not employees of the Firm. The Investment Committee meets on a quarterly basis to perform rigorous due diligence on investments that Merle Advisors recommends as well as investments that Merle Advisors may potentially recommend to clients. Merle Advisors utilizes Morningstar, a provider of investment analytics, to assist with ongoing monitoring of investments as well as for general market data.

Merle Advisors believes in comprehensive financial planning and works diligently to understand the complex pieces of its clients' financial lives. While Merle Advisors cannot provide legal or tax advice to our clients, the Firm works alongside clients' other advisors to ensure that all parts of their financial picture are considered. Merle Advisors's goal is to grow and protect each client's wealth. Merle Advisors's plan for each client is continuously evolving as their lives change and the Firm will continue to make changes as they grow. The investments that the Firm recommends for a client will be informed by their overall wealth management plan.

Risk of Loss

The following list of risk factors does not purport to be a complete enumeration or explanation of the risks involved with respect to the Firm's investment management activities. Clients should consult with their legal, tax, and other advisors before engaging the Firm to provide investment management services on their behalf.

Market Risks

Investing involves risk, including the potential loss of principal, and all investors should be guided accordingly. The profitability of a significant portion of Merle Advisors's recommendations and/or investment decisions may depend to a great extent upon correctly assessing the future course of price movements of stocks, bonds and other asset classes. In addition, investments may be adversely affected by financial markets and economic conditions throughout the world. There can be no assurance that Merle Advisors will be able to predict these price movements accurately or capitalize on any such assumptions.

Volatility Risks

The prices and values of investments can be highly volatile, and are influenced by, among other things, interest rates, general economic conditions, the condition of the financial markets, the financial condition of the issuers of such assets, changing supply and demand relationships, and programs and policies of governments.

Cash Management Risks

The Firm may invest some of a client's assets temporarily in money market funds or other similar types of investments, during which time an advisory account may be prevented from achieving its investment objective.

Equity-Related Securities and Instruments

The Firm may take long positions in common stocks of U.S. and non-U.S. issuers traded on national securities exchanges and over-the-counter markets. The value of equity securities varies in response to many factors. These factors include, without limitation, factors specific to an issuer and factors specific to the industry in which the issuer participates. Individual companies may report poor results or be negatively affected by industry and/or economic trends and developments, and the stock prices of such companies may suffer a decline in response. In addition, equity securities are subject to stock risk, which is the risk that stock prices historically rise and fall in periodic cycles. U.S. and non-U.S. stock markets have experienced periods of substantial price volatility in the past and may do so again in the future. In addition, investments in small-capitalization, midcapitalization and financially distressed companies may be subject to more abrupt or erratic price movements and may lack sufficient market liquidity, and these issuers often face greater business risks.

Fixed Income Securities

While the Firm emphasizes risk-averse management and capital preservation in its fixed-income bond portfolios, clients who invest in this product can lose money, including losing a portion of their original investment. The prices of the securities in our portfolios fluctuate. The Firm does not guarantee any particular level of performance. Below is a representative list of the types of risks clients should consider before investing in this product.

- Interest rate risk. Prices of bonds tend to move in the opposite direction to interest rate changes. Typically, a rise in interest rates will negatively affect bond prices. The longer the duration and average maturity of a portfolio, the greater the likely reaction to interest rate moves.
- Credit (or default) risk. A bond's price will generally fall if the issuer fails to make a scheduled interest or principal payment, if the credit rating of the security is downgraded, or if the perceived creditworthiness of the issuer deteriorates.

- Liquidity risk. Sectors of the bond market can experience a sudden downturn in trading activity. When there is little or no trading activity in a security, it can be difficult to sell the security at or near its perceived value. In such a market, bond prices may fall.
- Call risk. Some bonds give the issuer the option to call or redeem the bond before the maturity date. If an issuer calls a bond when interest rates are declining, the proceeds may have to be reinvested at a lower yield. During periods of market illiquidity or rising rates, prices of callable securities may be subject to increased volatility.
- Prepayment risk. When interest rates fall, the principal of mortgage-backed securities may be prepaid. These prepayments can reduce the portfolio's yield because proceeds may have to be reinvested at a lower yield.
- Extension risk. When interest rates rise or there is a lack of refinancing opportunities, prepayments of mortgage-backed securities or callable bonds may be less than expected. This would lengthen the portfolio's duration and average maturity and increase its sensitivity to rising rates and its potential for price declines.

Mutual Funds and ETFs

An investment in a mutual fund or ETF involves risk, including the loss of principal. Mutual fund and ETF shareholders are necessarily subject to the risks stemming from the individual issuers of the fund's underlying portfolio securities. Such shareholders are also liable for taxes on any fund-level capital gains, as mutual funds and ETFs are required by law to distribute capital gains in the event they sell securities for a profit that cannot be offset by a corresponding loss.

Shares of mutual funds are generally distributed and redeemed on an ongoing basis by the fund itself or a broker acting on its behalf. The trading price at which a share is transacted is equal to a fund's stated daily per share net asset value ("NAV"), plus any shareholders fees (*e.g.*, sales loads, purchase fees, redemption fees). The per share NAV of a mutual fund is calculated at the end of each business day, although the actual NAV fluctuates with intraday changes to the market value of the fund's holdings. The trading prices of a mutual fund's shares may differ from the NAV during periods of market volatility, which may, among other factors, lead to the mutual fund's shares trading at a premium or discount to actual NAV.

Shares of ETFs are listed on securities exchanges and transacted at negotiated prices in the secondary market. Generally, ETF shares trade at or near their most recent NAV, which is generally calculated at least once daily for index-based ETFs and potentially more frequently for actively managed ETFs. However, certain inefficiencies may cause the shares to trade at a premium or discount to their pro rata NAV. There is also no guarantee that an active secondary market for such shares will develop or continue to exist. Generally, an ETF only redeems shares when aggregated as creation units (usually 20,000 shares

or more). Therefore, if a liquid secondary market ceases to exist for shares of a particular ETF, a shareholder may have no way to dispose of such shares.

Use of Independent Managers

As stated above, Merle Advisors selects certain Independent Managers to manage a portion of its clients' assets. In these situations, Merle Advisors continues to conduct ongoing due diligence of such managers, but such recommendations rely to a great extent on the Independent Managers' ability to successfully implement their investment strategies. In addition, Merle Advisors does not have the ability to supervise the Independent Managers on a day-to-day basis.

Options

Options allow investors to buy or sell a security at a contracted "strike" price at or within a specific period of time. Clients may pay or collect a premium for buying or selling an option. Investors transact in options to either hedge (i.e., limit) losses in an attempt to reduce risk or to speculate on the performance of the underlying securities. Options transactions contain a number of inherent risks, including the partial or total loss of principal in the event that the value of the underlying security or index does not increase/decrease to the level of the respective strike price. Holders of options contracts are also subject to default by the option writer which may be unwilling or unable to perform its contractual obligations.

Use of Private Placements, Including Collective Investment Vehicles

Merle Advisors recommends that certain clients invest in privately placed securities. This can include collective investment vehicles (e.g., hedge funds, private equity funds, etc.) as well as other private investments. The managers of any collective investment vehicles have broad discretion in selecting the investments. There are few limitations on the types of securities or other financial instruments which may be traded and no requirement to diversify. Hedge funds may trade on margin or otherwise leverage positions, thereby potentially increasing the risk to the vehicle. In addition, because the investments are not registered as securities and any collective vehicle is not registered as an investment company, there is an absence of regulation. There are numerous other risks in investing in these securities. Clients should consult each investment's private placement memorandum and/or other documents explaining such risks prior to investing.

Use of Structured Products

Structured products involve derivatives and a higher degree of risk factors that may not be suitable for all investors. Such risks include risk of adverse or unanticipated market developments, issuer credit quality risk, risk of counterparty or issuer default, risk of lack of uniform standard pricing, risk of adverse events involving any underlying reference obligations, entity or other measure, risk of high volatility, and risk of illiquidity/ little to no secondary market. In certain transactions, investors may lose their entire investment, i.e., incur an unlimited loss.

Use of Margin

While the use of margin borrowing for investments can substantially improve returns, it may also increase overall portfolio risk. Margin transactions are generally effected using capital borrowed from a Financial Institution, which is secured by a client's holdings. Under certain circumstances, a lending Financial Institution may demand an increase in the underlying collateral. If the client is unable to provide the additional collateral, the Financial Institution may liquidate account assets to satisfy the client's outstanding obligations, which could have extremely adverse consequences. In addition, fluctuations in the amount of a client's borrowings and the corresponding interest rates may have a significant effect on the profitability and stability of a client's portfolio.

Currency Risks

An advisory account that holds investments denominated in currencies other than the currency in which the advisory account is denominated may be adversely affected by the volatility of currency exchange rates.

Interest Rate Risks

Interest rates may fluctuate significantly, causing price volatility with respect to securities or instruments held by clients.

Item 9. Disciplinary Information

Merle Advisors has not been involved in any legal or disciplinary events that are material to a client's evaluation of its advisory business or the integrity of its management.

Item 10. Other Financial Industry Activities and Affiliations

This item requires investment advisers to disclose certain financial industry activities and affiliations. The Firm does not have any other financial industry activities or affiliations that need to be disclosed.

Registered Representatives of a Broker-Dealer

Certain of the Firm's Supervised Persons are registered representatives of PKS and provide clients with securities brokerage services under a separate commission-based arrangement. This arrangement is described at length in Item 5.

Relationship with Dynasty Financial Partners, LLC

As described herein, Merle Advisors maintains a business relationship with Dynasty. Dynasty offers operational and back office core service support including access to a network of service providers. Through the Dynasty network of service providers, Merle Advisors may receive preferred pricing on trading technology, transition support, reporting, custody, brokerage, compliance, and other related consulting services.

While Merle Advisors believes this open architecture structure for operational services best serves the interests of its clients, this relationship may potentially present certain conflicts of interest due to the fact that Dynasty is paid by Merle Advisors or its clients for the services referenced above. In light of the foregoing, Merle Advisors seeks at all times to ensure that any material conflicts are addressed on a fully-disclosed basis and handled in a manner that is aligned with its clients' best interests. Merle Advisors does not receive any portion of the fees paid directly to Dynasty, its affiliates or the service providers made available through Dynasty's platform. In addition, Merle Advisors reviews such relationships, including the service providers engaged through Dynasty, on a periodic basis in an effort to ensure clients are receiving competitive rates in relation to the quality and scope of the services provided.

Item 11. Code of Ethics

Merle Advisors has adopted a code of ethics in compliance with applicable securities laws ("Code of Ethics") that sets forth the standards of conduct expected of its Supervised Persons. Merle Advisors's Code of Ethics contains written policies reasonably designed to prevent certain unlawful practices such as the use of material non-public information by the Firm or any of its Supervised Persons and the trading by the same of securities ahead of clients in order to take advantage of pending orders.

The Code of Ethics also requires certain of Merle Advisors's personnel to report their personal securities holdings and transactions and obtain pre-approval of certain investments (*e.g.*, initial public offerings, limited offerings). However, the Firm's Supervised Persons are permitted to buy or sell securities that it also recommends to clients if done in a fair and equitable manner that is consistent with the Firm's policies and procedures. This Code of Ethics has been established recognizing that some securities trade in sufficiently broad markets to permit transactions by certain personnel to be completed without any appreciable impact on the markets of such securities. Therefore, under limited circumstances, exceptions may be made to the policies stated below.

When the Firm is engaging in or considering a transaction in any security on behalf of a client, no Supervised Person with access to this information may knowingly effect for themselves or for their immediate family (*i.e.*, spouse, minor children and adults living in the same household) a transaction in that security unless:

- the transaction has been completed;
- the transaction for the Supervised Person is completed as part of a batch trade with clients; or
- a decision has been made not to engage in the transaction for the client.

These requirements are not applicable to: (i) direct obligations of the Government of the United States; (ii) money market instruments, bankers' acceptances, bank certificates of deposit, commercial paper, repurchase agreements and other high quality short-term debt instruments, including repurchase agreements; (iii) shares issued by money market funds; and iv) shares issued by other unaffiliated open-end mutual funds.

Clients and prospective clients may contact Merle Advisors to request a copy of its Code of Ethics by contacting the Firm at the phone number on the cover page of this brochure.

Item 12. Brokerage Practices

Recommendation of Broker-Dealers for Client Transactions

Merle Advisors recommends that clients utilize the custody, brokerage and clearing services of National Financial Services LLC and Fidelity Brokerage Services LLC (together with affiliates, "Fidelity") for investment management accounts. The final decision to custody assets with Fidelity is at the discretion of the client, including those accounts under ERISA or IRA rules and regulations, in which case the client is acting as either the plan sponsor or IRA accountholder. Merle Advisors is independently owned and operated and not affiliated with Fidelity. Fidelity provides Merle Advisors with access to its institutional trading and custody services, which are typically not available to retail investors.

Factors which Merle Advisors considers in recommending Fidelity or any other broker-dealer to clients include their respective financial strength, reputation, execution, pricing, research and service. Fidelity enables the Firm to obtain many mutual funds without transaction charges and other securities at nominal transaction charges. Fidelity has also agreed to reimburse clients for exit fees associated with moving accounts to Fidelity. The reimbursement is only available up to a certain amount for all of the Firm's clients over a twelve month period. Fees are reimbursed on a first-come-first-served basis so that no clients are favored. The commissions and/or transaction fees charged by Fidelity may be higher or lower than those charged by other Financial Institutions.

The commissions paid by Merle Advisors's clients to Fidelity comply with the Firm's duty to obtain "best execution." Clients may pay commissions that are higher than another qualified Financial Institution might charge to effect the same transaction where Merle Advisors determines that the commissions are reasonable

in relation to the value of the brokerage and research services received. In seeking best execution, the determinative factor is not the lowest possible cost, but whether the transaction represents the best qualitative execution, taking into consideration the full range of a Financial Institution's services, including among others, the value of research provided, execution capability, commission rates and responsiveness. Merle Advisors seeks competitive rates but may not necessarily obtain the lowest possible commission rates for client transactions.

Transactions may be cleared through other broker-dealers with whom the Firm and its custodians have entered into agreements for prime brokerage clearing services. This includes, but is not limited to the PKS trade away transactions described above. Should an account make use of prime brokerage, the Client may be required to sign an additional agreement, and additional fees are likely to be charged.

Consistent with obtaining best execution, brokerage transactions are directed to certain broker-dealers in return for investment research products and/or services which assist Merle Advisors in its investment decision-making process. Such research will be used to service all of the Firm's clients, but brokerage commissions paid by one client may be used to pay for research that is not used in managing that client's portfolio. The receipt of investment research products and/or services as well as the allocation of the benefit of such investment research products and/or services poses a conflict of interest because Merle Advisors does not have to produce or pay for the products or services.

Merle Advisors periodically and systematically reviews its policies and procedures regarding its recommendation of Financial Institutions in light of its duty to obtain best execution.

Software and Support Provided by Financial Institutions

Merle Advisors receives without cost from Fidelity administrative support, computer software, related systems support, as well as other third party support as further described below (together "Support") which allow Merle Advisors to better monitor client accounts maintained at Fidelity and otherwise conduct its business. Merle Advisors receives the Support without cost because the Firm renders investment management services to clients that maintain assets at Fidelity. The Support is not provided in connection with securities transactions of clients (i.e., not "soft dollars"). The Support benefits Merle Advisors, but not its clients directly. Clients should be aware that Merle Advisors's receipt of economic benefits such as the Support from a broker-dealer creates a conflict of interest since these benefits will influence the Firm's choice of broker-dealer over another that does not furnish similar software, systems support or services. In fulfilling its duties to its clients, Merle Advisors endeavors at all times to put the interests of its clients first and has determined that the recommendation of Fidelity is in the best interest of clients and satisfies the Firm's duty to seek best execution.

Specifically, Merle Advisors receives the following benefits from Fidelity: i) receipt of duplicate client confirmations and bundled duplicate statements; ii) access to a trading desk that exclusively services its institutional traders; iii) access to block trading which provides the ability to aggregate securities

transactions and then allocate the appropriate shares to client accounts; and iv) access to an electronic communication network for client order entry and account information.

In addition, the Firm receives funds to be used toward qualifying third-party service providers for research, marketing, compliance, technology and software platforms and services.

These services generally are available to independent investment advisors on an unsolicited basis, at no charge to them so long as a certain amount of the advisor's clients' assets are maintained in accounts at Fidelity. Fidelity's services include brokerage services that are related to the execution of securities transactions, custody, research, including that in the form of advice, analyses and reports, and access to mutual funds and other investments that are otherwise generally available only to institutional investors or would require a significantly higher minimum initial investment.

For client accounts maintained in its custody, Fidelity generally does not charge separately for custody services but is compensated by account holders through commissions or other transaction-related or asset-based fees for securities trades that are executed through Fidelity or that settle into Fidelity accounts.

Fidelity also makes available to the Firm other products and services that benefit the Firm but may not benefit its clients' accounts. These benefits may include national, regional or Firm specific educational events organized and/or sponsored by Fidelity. Other potential benefits may include occasional business entertainment of personnel of Merle Advisors by Fidelity personnel, including meals, invitations to sporting events, including golf tournaments, and other forms of entertainment, some of which may accompany educational opportunities. Other products and services assist Merle Advisors in managing and administering clients' accounts. These include software and other technology (and related technological training) that provide access to client account data (such as trade confirmations and account statements), facilitate trade execution (and allocation of aggregated trade orders for multiple client accounts), provide research, pricing information and other market data, facilitate payment of the Firm's fees from its clients' accounts, and assist with back-office training and support functions, recordkeeping and client reporting. Many of these services generally may be used to service all or some substantial number of the Firm's accounts, including accounts not maintained at Fidelity. Fidelity also makes available to Merle Advisors other services intended to help the Firm manage and further develop its business enterprise. These services may include professional compliance, legal and business consulting, publications and conferences on practice management, information technology, business succession, regulatory compliance, employee benefits providers, human capital consultants, insurance and marketing. In addition, Fidelity may make available, arrange and/or pay vendors for these types of services rendered to the Firm by independent third parties. Fidelity may discount or waive fees it would otherwise charge for some of these services or pay all or a part of the fees of a third-party providing these services to the Firm.

Brokerage for Client Referrals

Merle Advisors does not consider, in selecting or recommending broker-dealers, whether the Firm receives client referrals from the Financial Institutions or other third party.

Directed Brokerage

The client may direct Merle Advisors in writing to use a particular Financial Institution to execute some or all transactions for the client. In that case, the client will negotiate terms and arrangements for the account with that Financial Institution and the Firm will not seek better execution services or prices from other Financial Institutions or be able to “batch” client transactions for execution through other Financial Institutions with orders for other accounts managed by Merle Advisors (as described above). As a result, the client may pay higher commissions or other transaction costs, greater spreads or may receive less favorable net prices, on transactions for the account than would otherwise be the case. Subject to its duty of best execution, Merle Advisors may decline a client’s request to direct brokerage if, in the Firm’s sole discretion, such directed brokerage arrangements would result in additional operational difficulties or violate restrictions imposed by other broker-dealers (as further discussed below).

Commissions or Sales Charges for Recommendations of Securities

As discussed above, certain Supervised Persons in their respective individual capacities are registered representatives of PKS. These Supervised Persons are subject to FINRA Rule 3280 which restricts registered representatives from conducting securities transactions away from their broker-dealer unless the registered representatives give prior notice of such transactions to PKS and, in most circumstances, PKS provides written consent. Therefore, clients are advised that certain Supervised Persons are restricted to conducting securities transactions through PKS if they have not secured written consent from PKS to execute securities transactions through a different broker-dealer. Absent such written consent or separation from PKS, these Supervised Persons are generally prohibited from executing securities transactions through any broker-dealer other than PKS under its internal supervisory policies. The Firm is cognizant of its duty to obtain best execution and has implemented policies and procedures reasonably designed in such pursuit.

Trade Aggregation

Transactions for each client will be effected independently, unless Merle Advisors decides to purchase or sell the same securities for several clients at approximately the same time. Merle Advisors may (but is not obligated to) combine or “batch” such orders to obtain best execution, to negotiate more favorable commission rates or to allocate equitably among the Firm’s clients differences in prices and commissions or other transaction costs that might not have been obtained had such orders been placed independently. Under this procedure, transactions will be averaged as to price and allocated among Merle Advisors’s

clients pro rata to the purchase and sale orders placed for each client on any given day. To the extent that the Firm determines to aggregate client orders for the purchase or sale of securities, including securities in which Merle Advisors's Supervised Persons may invest, the Firm does so in accordance with applicable rules promulgated under the Advisers Act and no-action guidance provided by the staff of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Merle Advisors does not receive any additional compensation or remuneration as a result of the aggregation.

In the event that the Firm determines that a prorated allocation is not appropriate under the particular circumstances, the allocation will be made based upon other relevant factors, which include: (i) when only a small percentage of the order is executed, shares may be allocated to the account with the smallest order or the smallest position or to an account that is out of line with respect to security or sector weightings relative to other portfolios, with similar mandates; (ii) allocations may be given to one account when one account has limitations in its investment guidelines which prohibit it from purchasing other securities which are expected to produce similar investment results and can be purchased by other accounts; (iii) if an account reaches an investment guideline limit and cannot participate in an allocation, shares may be reallocated to other accounts (this may be due to unforeseen changes in an account's assets after an order is placed); (iv) with respect to sale allocations, allocations may be given to accounts low in cash; (v) in cases when a pro rata allocation of a potential execution would result in a de minimis allocation in one or more accounts, the Firm may exclude the account(s) from the allocation; the transactions may be executed on a pro rata basis among the remaining accounts; or (vi) in cases where a small proportion of an order is executed in all accounts, shares may be allocated to one or more accounts on a random basis.

Trade Errors

In the event a trading error occurs in a client's account, Merle Advisors's policy is to restore the account to the position it should have been in had the trading error not occurred. Depending on the circumstances, corrective actions may include canceling the trade, adjusting an allocation, and/or reimbursing the account.

Item 13. Review of Accounts

Account Reviews

Merle Advisors monitors client portfolios on a continuous and ongoing basis and regular account reviews are conducted on at least an annual basis. Such reviews are conducted by the Firm's investment adviser representatives and the Director of Client Relations. All investment advisory clients are encouraged to discuss their needs, goals and objectives with Merle Advisors and to keep the Firm informed of any changes thereto.

Account Statements and Reports

Clients are provided with transaction confirmation notices and regular summary account statements directly from the Financial Institutions where their assets are custodied. On a quarterly and annual basis, clients also receive written or electronic reports from Merle Advisors and/or an outside service provider, which contain certain account and/or market-related information. Clients should compare the account statements they receive from their custodian with any documents or reports they receive from Merle Advisors or an outside service provider.

Item 14. Client Referrals and Other Compensation

Client Referrals

The Firm does not currently provide compensation to any third-party solicitors for client referrals. In the event a client is introduced to Merle Advisors by an affiliate of the Firm, the Firm may pay that person a referral fee in accordance with applicable state securities laws. Unless otherwise disclosed, any such referral fee is paid solely from Merle Advisors's investment management fee and does not result in any additional charge to the client. Any affiliated solicitor of Merle Advisors is required to disclose the nature of his or her relationship to prospective clients at the time of the solicitation and will provide all prospective clients with a copy of the Firm's written brochure(s) at the time of the solicitation.

Other Compensation

The Firm receives economic benefits from Fidelity. The benefits, conflicts of interest and how they are addressed are discussed above in response to Item 12.

Item 15. Custody

Merle Advisors is deemed to have custody of client funds and securities because the Firm is given the ability to debit client accounts for payment of the Firm's fees. As such, client funds and securities are maintained at one or more Financial Institutions that serve as the qualified custodian with respect to such assets. Such qualified custodians will send account statements to clients at least once per calendar quarter that typically detail any transactions in such account for the relevant period.

In addition, as discussed in Item 13, Merle Advisors will also send, or otherwise make available, periodic supplemental reports to clients. Clients should carefully review the statements sent directly by the Financial

Institutions and compare them to those received from Merle Advisors. Any other custody disclosures can be found in the Firm's Form ADV Part 1.

Item 16. Investment Discretion

Merle Advisors is given the authority to exercise discretion on behalf of some clients. Merle Advisors is considered to exercise investment discretion over a client's account if it can effect and/or direct transactions in client accounts without first seeking their consent. Merle Advisors is given this authority through a power-of-attorney included in the agreement between Merle Advisors and the client. Clients may request a limitation on this authority (such as certain securities not to be bought or sold). Merle Advisors takes discretion over the following activities:

- The securities to be purchased or sold;
- The amount of securities to be purchased or sold;
- When transactions are made;
- The broker-dealer that executes trades (in the case of a prime brokerage relationship); and
- The Independent Managers to be hired or fired.

Item 17. Voting Client Securities

Declination of Proxy Voting Authority

Merle Advisors does not accept the authority to vote a client's securities (i.e., proxies) on their behalf. Clients receive proxies directly from the Financial Institutions where their assets are custodied and may contact the Firm at the contact information on the cover of this brochure with questions about any such issuer solicitations.

In addition, the Firm does not determine if securities held by clients are the subject of a class action lawsuit or whether clients are eligible to participate in class action settlements or litigation nor does the Firm initiate or participate in litigation to recover damages on clients' behalf for injuries as a result of actions, misconduct, or negligence by issuers of securities held by clients.

Item 18. Financial Information

Merle Advisors is not required to disclose any financial information listed in the instructions to Item 18 because:

- The Firm does not require or solicit the prepayment of more than \$1,200 in fees six months or more in advance of services rendered;
- The Firm does not have a financial condition that is reasonably likely to impair its ability to meet contractual commitments to clients; and
- The Firm has not been the subject of a bankruptcy petition at any time during the past ten years.