HEPTAGON Capital

Driehaus US Micro Cap Equity Fund

Q1 2025 Commentary

Portfolio Management

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Investment Objective

The investment objective of the Fund is to achieve long-term capital growth. The Fund's Sub-Investment Manager, Driehaus Capital Management LLC, is a privately-held boutique asset management firm located in Chicago, USA. The firm was founded in 1982 and has USD 18.3 billion of assets under management.

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Opinions expressed whether in general or in both on the performance of individual investments and in a wider economic context represent the views of the contributor at the time of preparation.

The **Driehaus US Micro Cap Equity Fund** (the "Fund") is a sub-fund of Heptagon Fund ICAV which is an open-ended umbrella type investment vehicle authorised pursuant to UCITS regulations. Heptagon Capital Limited ("Heptagon") is the Investment Manager and Driehaus Capital Management LLC ("Driehaus") is the Sub-Investment Manager meaning Driehaus exercises discretionary investment authority over the Fund. The Fund was launched on 7th December 2016 and had AUM of USD 735m as of 31st March 2025. During the first quarter of 2025, the Fund underperformed the Russell Micro Cap Growth Index TR USD (the "Index"), returning -18.6% (C USD share class) compared to -17.7% for the Index.

Market Overview

The U.S. equity market declined sharply during the March quarter. Initially equities held up well and were up on a year-to-date basis entering the second half of February. However, in late February stocks broadly began to decline as concerns surrounding President Trump's massive tariffs grew. At the same time, U.S. economic trends were strong heading into February, but conditions became more mixed during the second half of the quarter as consumer and business sentiment weakened and net imports and industrial activity became front loaded ahead of the implementation of expected tariffs in April. Investor anxiety steadily grew about the negative ramifications of the tariffs as rhetoric from the Trump Administration ramped up ahead of so-called April 2nd Liberation Day.

Selling in late February and March was intense and historic. According to the large prime brokers, hedge fund de-risking and associated performance of certain risk factors (such as Beta and Medium-Term Momentum) were among the most extreme on record as policy uncertainty rose and concerns about the tariffs increased. To illustrate the intensity of the selling, here is just a sample of prime broker comments/sentiment from the late February to early March period:

- Both the Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs Momentum indices through mid-March saw their worst performances in over 15 years.

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- The Bank of America beta risk factor basket saw its worst 14-day return in 10 years.
- "Hedge funds sold global equities at their fastest pace ever recorded" per Goldman Sachs, as it saw "unprecedented de-risking."

This intense selling and de-risking in late February and early March occurred between two other historically volatile periods. First, the debut of DeepSeek's lower cost Open Source AI Large Language Model (LLM) on January 27th caused extreme selling and unwinding of stocks related to the AI infrastructure data center capex theme. This dynamic caused many market leaders in technology and industrials to fall sharply. We believe the introduction of DeepSeek effectively ended the promising AI infrastructure investment theme as concern rose about the sustainability of the AI capex growth. Second, the days following Trump's April 2nd "reciprocal tariff" announcement saw some of the most extreme daily market declines in decades as the markets attempted to price in the impact of the proposed tariff increases which were greater than the 1930 tariff rates implemented with the passage of the disastrous Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act.

Trump Tariff Turmoil

On April 2nd, Trump announced "reciprocal" tariffs that were much higher and more severe than expected. He proposed tariffs of at least 10% on all countries globally and much higher tariff rates on 60 countries with some rates approaching 50%. The day after Trump's "Liberation Day" announcement became "Obliteration Day" for the market as the S&P 500 fell nearly 5%, the Nasdaq Composite nearly 6% and the Russell 2000 and Russell 2000 Growth 6.4%. Then the following day, the S&P 500, and the Nasdaq both declined by over 5.8%, the Russell 2000 fell nearly 4.5% and the Russell 2000 Growth 4.7%. It was the U.S. market's steepest two-day decline since the Covid lock down period of 2020. The dollar, crude oil and long-term treasury yields also all fell sharply.

Investors are clearly concerned about the path forward and what the tariffs mean for U.S. and global economic growth and corporate earnings. The tariffs will likely increase the cost of goods sold and overall prices, and will slow global trade dramatically. There was immediate concern about a growth slowdown and a possible recession.

The perplexing tariff formula used by the Trump Administration defies conventional economics. The "reciprocal" tariff rates were far above rates charged by other countries and were determined by taking the bilateral trade goods deficit, divided by the U.S. annual goods imported from that country then dividing it by two, arriving at the new tariff rate. To ensure global reach, a 10% minimum base tariff was also implemented on all countries regardless of whether there is a trade deficit or a surplus. The tariffs violate at least twenty existing free trade agreements with various nations and are dubious legally as they may violate the Constitution as well as the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977 (IEEPA) which was used to justify the tariffs as an emergency.

Then on April 9th, after four days of sharp declines, as the equity market was falling into the abyss and the credit and bond markets were starting to show cracks, Trump pivoted. He announced a 90 day pause, setting all tariff rates at 10%, with the important exception of China where he increased that tariff to a stunning 145%. While still suboptimal, the market let out a sigh of relief and reversed sharply higher. The U.S. market had one of its largest single up days on record as sentiment set in that perhaps a near certain recession could be avoided and negotiations with up to 70 countries would soon begin. The Nasdaq rose over 12%, the S&P 500 8.5% and the Russell 2000 Growth over 9.5%.

Still there is tremendous uncertainty and many questions regarding the tariffs and their impact on the economy. What are Trump's real objectives, as he has stated multiple perplexing and sometimes conflicting goals? Will negotiations lead to reduced tariff rates? Trump and dozens of trading partners have expressed a desire to negotiate, and Trump loves to "make a deal." Will additional tariffs on various sectors be announced? Can the US-China relationship be repaired? The 145% tariff rate on China is so high that it is essentially a $400 billion embargo. The economic impact and dislocation will likely be immense if these tariffs remain in place for even a modest length of time.

Trump's stated goals are complex and often conflicting. He wants the impossible goal of balanced trade by eliminating all trade deficits. He wants to end non-tariff trade barriers that he calls "unfair" trade practices by trading partners, but

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these practices are often subjective and difficult to negotiate. He wants to punish or isolate China and to correct the massive trade deficit and many of their trade practices. He wants to return manufacturing back to the U.S. For context, a great deal of U.S. manufacturing shifted to China in the years after China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001. The U.S. saw thousands of manufacturing plants close, and millions of jobs disappear in that following decade, and it went from being the largest global manufacturer to now the second largest. This decade, since Covid, reshoring or the return of manufacturing in the U.S. has been accelerating, which we view as a sustainable multi-year theme. Still, Trump wants to reverse the offshoring that occurred over the past few decades. He also wants to “re-order the global trading system,” a system that has been in place for many decades with origins dating back to the end of World War 2. Which of these goals has the highest priority is unclear as his messaging and rhetoric keeps shifting. This dynamic is confusing market participants and business leaders who are seeking clarity on how this crisis can be resolved.

Now that Trump has ordered a 90 day pause, there is optimism that the peak tariff rates could be off the table and that tariff rates will be reduced below 10% (excluding China which are now at 145%). The market’s ultimate concern is the impact of the tariffs on the economy and on earnings. Any avoidance of a recession and dollar, credit, and interest rate stress will be a huge relief to the market.

This has been one of the most volatile and policy driven markets ever. Still there are multiple silver linings and potential positive outcomes that are important to consider:

- The 10% tariff rates (excluding China) are likely a high-water mark and could be negotiated lower as Trump and many key trade partners have said they want to make a deal.
- Trump has a long history of changing his mind and pivoting if there is too much market stress.
- While the tariffs will certainly pressure economic growth, the U.S. economy was relatively strong heading into this crisis with a solid labor market.
- Tariffs will be inflationary, but inflation has been trending favorably heading into April.
- Much of the U.S. economy is a service economy which could hold up relatively well as the tariffs take effect on the goods economy.
- The price of crude oil has fallen sharply acting as an offset to goods inflation and a cushion for the economy overall.
- It is possible that a court or Congress could step in to halt Trump’s executive actions on the tariffs.
- While the Fed is currently on the sidelines, it is still expected to cut the federal funds rate several times this year.
- The equity market has declined sharply, and investor sentiment is extremely negative already so any positive resolution regarding tariff rates and notable bilateral or multi-lateral deals will be viewed very positively by the market.
- Deregulation and lower taxes could serve as favorable pro-business catalysts this year.

Performance Review

The Driehaus US Micro Cap Equity Fund underperformed its benchmark by 90 basis points for the March quarter, declining 18.6% versus a decline of 17.7% for the Russell Micro Cap Growth. Additionally, the Russell Micro Index fell 14.4%, the Russell 2000 -9.5%, the Russell 2000 Growth -11.1%, and the S&P 500 -4.3% for the quarter.

It was a challenging quarter as the market’s breadth was extremely poor. As mentioned above, the unraveling of the AI infrastructure theme, followed by the panic surrounding Trump’s tariff turmoil has been a deep one-two punch. Additionally, the controversial appointment of RFK Jr (Robert F Kennedy Jr) as the new Secretary of HHS (Health and Human Services) which oversees the FDA (Food & Drug Administration) has been an overhang on the healthcare sector.

From a sector perspective, the top two contributing sectors on a relative basis for the quarter were information technology and energy. The bottom two performing sectors on a relative basis in the March quarter were communication services and healthcare.

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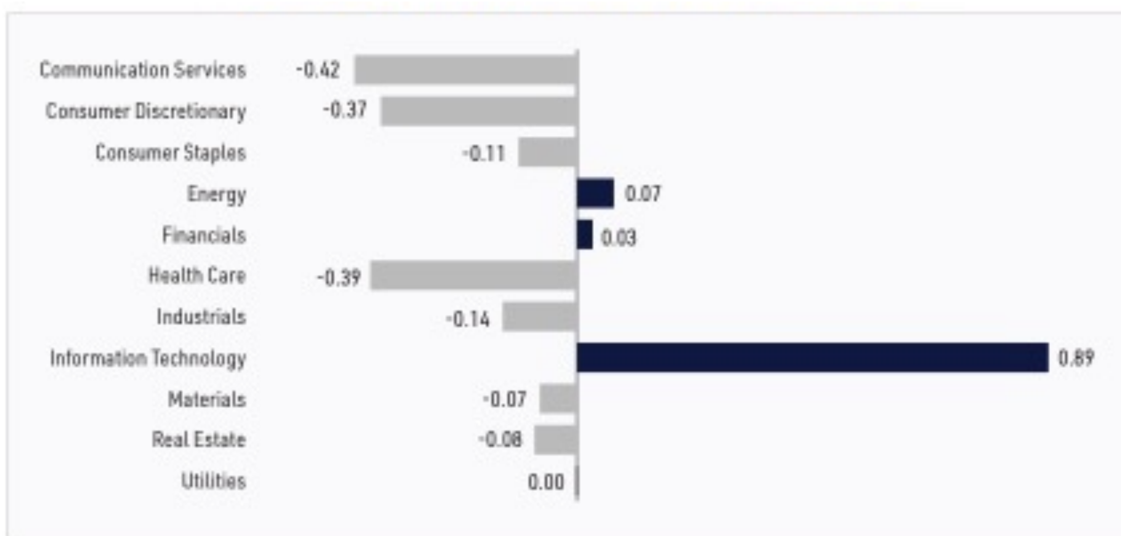
The performance data below represents the strategy's composite of micro cap growth accounts managed by Driehaus Capital Management LLC (DCM). These returns are estimated for the period, as the underlying accounts' data has yet to be reconciled with the custodian bank. Net-of-fee returns reflect the deduction of advisory fees and, in some instances, other fees and expenses such as administrative and custodian fees, while the gross of fee returns do not. Both figures are net of brokerage commissions charged to the accounts and reflect the reinvestment of income and other earnings. The performance data shown below represents past performance and does not guarantee future results. Current performance may be lower or higher than the performance data quoted.

Exhibit 1: Sector Attribution Relative to Benchmark

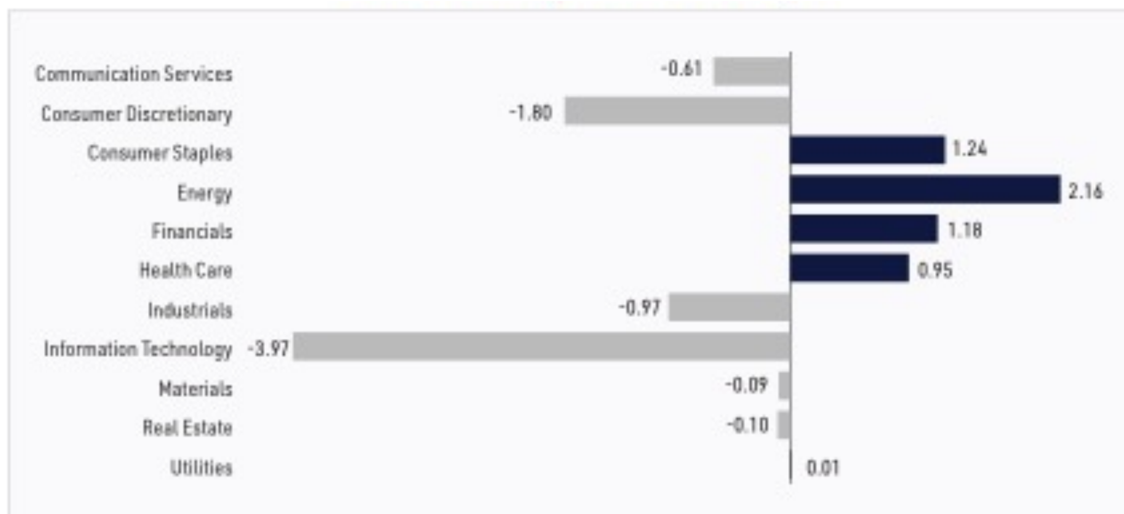


Source: Driehaus. Note: The sector attribution relative to benchmark for each MSCI/GICS Sector is equal to the sum of the individual Attribution Effects for that MSCI/GICS Sector. This exhibit is ex-cash. The cash weighting at 3/31/2025 was 2.4%.

Strategy Overview and Positioning

The largest overweights in the portfolio in the March quarter were the Consumer Discretionary and Industrials sectors. The largest underweights during the March quarter were Information Technology and Healthcare. The biggest shifts in the portfolio from the fourth quarter of 2024 was a decrease in its active weight to Information Technology and an increase in its active weight to Energy. Detailed information about sector performance is below.

Exhibit 2: Change in Relative Weight



Source: Driehaus. Note: Change in relative weight is the difference between the change in ending weight from the previous quarter. This exhibit is ex-cash. The cash weighting at 3/31/2025 was 2.4%

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Sectors detracting from relative returns during the quarter (in order of relative impact):

Communication Services

Communications Services detracted 42 basis points in relative terms and 73 basis points in absolute terms. Our holdings declined 23.6% versus a decline of 10.1% for the index. Our exposure to the sector fell from 3.3% to 2.9% during the quarter, an underweight versus 3.5% for the index. It is a small sector, but we hold a few advertising related technology companies that pulled back after a strong 2024 amidst the general sell-off in advertising related stocks.

Healthcare

Healthcare detracted 39 basis points relatively and 536 basis points on an absolute basis. Our holdings declined 17.9% versus 16.8% for the index. We increased our exposure from 29.7% to 30.5% during the quarter, versus the index at 34.5% for the index. The portfolio finished the quarter slightly overweight biotech and medical devices while maintaining a healthy underweight in pharmaceuticals and an underweight in the other smaller healthcare sub-industries within the benchmark.

The Healthcare sector saw widespread multiple compression before and after the appointment of RFK Jr. As mentioned earlier he is controversial, and the market fears he will have a negative impact on the approval process for new drugs and medical devices. We believe RFK Jr's actual impact remains to be seen. A lot will depend on the actions of the new FDA commissioner, Dr. Martin Makary, whose appointment is generally viewed as positive by the biotech industry and healthcare sector overall. While large layoffs (around 18%) of full-time staff at the FDA were recently announced, we have been carefully monitoring for any potential negative impact. We believe the reductions are related to Trump's effort to reduce the size of the federal government much as other departments have seen via Elon Musk and DOGE (the Department of Government Efficiency) with the goal of reducing the annual federal deficit. Thus far it is unclear how many of the eliminated positions are actual drug reviewers and investigators versus other roles such as inspectors and general administrative functions. There is also little visibility in terms of how many of the reductions have occurred within drug regulation versus food regulation. There have been multiple high-profile departures of high-ranking regulators and directionally it is understandable why the market is concerned that this dynamic will slow down drug approvals and decision making. However, and on a positive note, we have checked in with numerous biotech management teams of the companies we hold and more broadly we have heard from well over 100 companies and thus far 100% of those biotech companies have reported very normal dialogue and communication with the FDA and no sign of any slowdown or delay. We believe our portfolio holdings with innovative new therapies will still see their drug candidates get approved over time as they normally would.

Our biotech holdings were down materially in absolute terms detracting 321 basis points but did outperform by 93 basis points during the quarter. Our biotech positions declined 18.0% versus 23.3% for the index for the quarter. We saw in line performance within medical devices and slight outperformance in diagnostic companies.

We remain encouraged fundamentally as we believe our biotech holdings have very promising and innovative clinical stage therapies demonstrating superior efficacy and safety in important disease indications, such as obesity, epilepsy, endocrinology, diabetes, neurology, autoimmune diseases, and oncology. We anticipate promising results from upcoming clinical trials.

Consumer Discretionary

Consumer Discretionary detracted 37 basis points on a relative basis and 229 basis points in absolute terms. Our holdings declined 20.0% versus a decline of 16.3% for the index. We decreased our sector exposure from 12.1% to 10.5%, maintaining an overweight versus 6.5% for the index. Our relative underperformance was due to declines in specialty retail. This was partially offset by positive performance in leisure, education, and gaming related businesses. Consumer fundamentals remain positive as wages and the labor market remain strong however the outlook is certainly cloudy as it depends on how long tariffs remain in place given the potential negative impact on inflation and consumer confidence.

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Industrials

Industrials detracted 14 basis points on a relative basis and 371 basis points in absolute terms, with our holdings declining 17.9% versus 17.1% for the index. Our exposure to the sector slightly increased from 19.8% to 20.6% versus 15.6% for the index. The sector saw some modest negative impact from AI data center related companies as well as underperformance in airlines. The sector had some partially offsetting positive performance from aerospace as well as machinery related companies.

Consumer Staples

Consumer Staples detracted 11 basis points in relative terms and 71 basis points in absolute terms. Our holdings declined 19.8% versus a decline of 17.3% for the index. We increased our exposure from 2.4% to 3.6% during the quarter, which is nearly equal weight versus 3.7% for the index.

Sectors contributing positively to returns during the quarter (in order of relative impact):

Technology

Technology contributed 89 basis points on a relative basis but detracted 403 basis points in absolute performance. The tech sector essentially reversed its strong percentage gains from the fourth quarter as our holdings fell 34.4% versus a decline of 31.4% for the index's tech holdings. We sharply reduced our exposure to the sector from 16.4% to 9.0% during the quarter, a material underweight versus the benchmark's 18.5% weighting. Market breadth remains poor as semiconductors, hardware and software were all weak and the tariff concerns are an overhang.

AI (Artificial Intelligence), which had been a strong and dominant theme in 2023 and 2024, saw broad weakness after the debut of DeepSeek's new LLM on January 27th. While capex growth by the large hyperscalers in AI infrastructure and data center spending remains strong, we believe the weakness in the related stocks is due to the idea that capex will decelerate in 2026 and beyond as DeepSeek's approach could lead to a commoditization of LLMs and more efficient building of AI applications. Over time, this will boost the development of AI related software, services, and applications but in the meantime, it is negative for stocks related to AI and data center infrastructure. We reduced our exposure quickly and dramatically after the development of DeepSeek.

Energy

The Energy sector contributed 7 basis points in relative returns but detracted 69 basis points in absolute terms. Our energy stocks fell 12.5% versus a decline of 11.2% for the index. We increased our exposure from 4.4% to 5.6%, an overweight versus 3.0% for the index. We have exposure to natural gas levered companies and also maintain exposure to exploration and production, oilfield infrastructure and uranium mining.

Financials

Financials contributed 3 basis points on a relative basis for the quarter but detracted 26 basis points in absolute terms. Our holdings fell 2.4% versus a gain of 1.6% for the index. We saw strength in specialty insurance, and narrow outperformance in regional banks, but saw declines in fintech and specialty finance lenders. We increased our exposure from 9.8% to 12.9%, versus an index weight of 10.2% by the end of the quarter.

Outlook & Positioning

It has been a challenging quarter and year-to-date with several major overhangs for the market, most notably the tariff situation. At this juncture, every part of the outlook depends on Trump's tariffs. The Trump administration and many trading partners are entering trade negotiations. If there are favorable new trade "deals" and tariff rates are lowered from here, that will be well received by the market as economic damage could be reduced. Certainly, some damage has already occurred on multiple fronts, but a quick resolution can avoid a lot of bad outcomes.

We have successfully managed portfolios through multiple crises and several bear markets over the past 27 years, including the Asian debt crisis, the Nasdaq bubble, the Great Financial Crisis (GFC), the European debt crisis, and the Covid shutdowns. This tariff crisis is unique, but it will create opportunities. Stocks of many strong businesses have

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declined sharply but will emerge positively out of this crisis. We are monitoring the constantly changing tariff policies very closely. As we enter the upcoming earnings season, many companies may not give near-term guidance given the high degree of uncertainty due to the tariffs. Yet as companies report earnings, a key focus for us will be to determine how tariffs are impacting expenses, margins, and demand for each holding and each new potential investment idea. As always, we will remain focused on companies that are well positioned to emerge from this unprecedented situation in a strong position to gain market share and to exceed expectations as we head into the second half of this year, 2026 and beyond.

In terms of portfolio positioning, we have an attractive mix of growth companies. By sector, Healthcare is our largest absolute weight, followed by Industrials, Financials, and Consumer Discretionary and Technology. On a relative basis, the strategy is overweight Industrials, Consumer Discretionary, Financials, and Energy. The strategy is underweight Healthcare, Technology, Consumer Staples, and Materials.

Quarterly Contributors

HCI Group, Inc. (HCI) is a homeowners insurance company operating predominantly in Florida. HCI was a top contributor after reporting DecQ24 results substantially above expectations, with catastrophe and attritional loss ratios well below estimates. The company's underwriting technology and benefits from Florida insurance reforms are driving the improved loss ratios.

Palomar Holdings, Inc. (PLMR) is an innovative specialty insurer serving the earthquake, inland marine and other property, casualty, fronting and crop insurance markets. PLMR was a top contributor after providing a 2025 earnings outlook that was well above consensus estimates. PLMR sees compelling growth opportunities coming from earthquake, crop and recent entries into the Excess & Surplus casualty and surety markets.

Quarterly Detractors

Crinetics Pharmaceuticals Inc (CRNX) is a clinical-stage drug company developing medicines to treat endocrine disorders. In early January, CRNX released updated data from their phase 2 study in congenital adrenal hyperplasia. While the data from the update continued to look excellent on an absolute basis, and relative to competitors, the data deteriorated from the initial disclosure in June 2024 and caused the stock to decline. We maintained a large position, given Crinetics' differentiated late-stage clinical assets and additional pipeline that we expect to come into view over the coming 6-18 months.

TeraWulf Inc. (WULF) operates datacenter facilities for Bitcoin mining and provides hosting and infrastructure solutions to AI cloud service companies. WULF was a top detractor during the quarter after Chinese startup DeepSeek released its Large Language Model in January. DeepSeek's LLM needs lower AI compute resources, and the potential adoption of similar open-source cost efficient architectures by other LLMs and hyperscalers is seen as a headwind for incremental AI compute demand in future periods.

Outright Buy

Tarsus Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (TARS) is a commercial-stage therapeutics company marketing a medicine for the treatment of demodex blepharitis, an inflammatory ophthalmic disease. Tarsus reported fourth quarter sales above consensus and launched metrics for their new drug within the quarter suggest that they continue to track above expectations. We initiated a position as part of a follow-on offering.

Aris Water Solutions, Inc. Class A (ARIS) offers full-cycle water handling and recycling solutions that increase the sustainability of energy company operations. As oil and gas drilling expands into the Delaware Basin in West Texas and New Mexico, the amount of water cut per barrel relative to oil is expected to increase and we expect this will benefit ARIS's business. During 1Q25, ARIS reported 4Q24 slightly above estimates (Rev: $118.6m vs. $109.6m estimate and EBITDA: $54.5m vs. $53.4m est.) and announced an accretive acreage acquisition. Shares performed strongly after the results were announced and the Fund initiated a position.

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Outright Sell

Modine Manufacturing Company (MOD) manufactures thermal management systems for the building, industrial, refrigeration, and datacenter markets. In January 2025, DeepSeek, a Chinese AI company, released a new open-source Large Language Model that caused uncertainty as to the actual amount of capital investment required for development of other Artificial Intelligence models. As a result, MOD and many other stocks exposed to datacenter investment saw significant weakness during the quarter. With increased uncertainty regarding the outlook for datacenter capex, the Fund reduced the position in MOD.

Core Scientific Inc (CORZ) operates datacenter facilities for Bitcoin mining and provides hosting and infrastructure solutions to AI cloud service companies. We exited the position during the quarter after Chinese startup DeepSeek released its Large Language Model in January. As mentioned above, DeepSeek's LLM technology is seen as a headwind for incremental AI compute demand in future periods.

Sincerely,
Heptagon Capital and Driehaus Capital Management

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Annualized Total Returns as of 31st March 2025, net of fees

	Q1 25	1-Year	3-Year	5-Year
Driehaus US Micro Cap Equity Fund	-18.6%	-6.9%	0.6%	19.6%
Russell Micro Cap Growth Index TR	-17.7%	-5.9%	-3.8%	8.2%

Source: Factset Research Systems, Inc.
Fund performance relates to the UCITS Fund (IE00BDB53K54, net of fees, in USD).

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The Fund is subject to special risk considerations including geographic concentration risk, portfolio concentration risk and operational risk. The investment return and principal value of an investment will fluctuate so that the investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Any investor should consider the investment objectives, risks and charges and expenses of the fund carefully before investing. Where an investment is denominated in a currency other than the investor's currency, changes in rates of exchange may have an adverse effect on the value, price of, or income derived from the investment.

SFDR

The Fund takes sustainability risks into account within the investment process, and this is disclosed in accordance with Article 6 requirements of the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation ('SFDR') in the Fund's Prospectus. However, the Fund does not have as its objective sustainable investment and does not promote environmental or social characteristics for the purposes of the SFDR. Sustainability risks may occur in a manner that is not anticipated by the Sub-Investment Manager, there may be a sudden, material negative impact on the value of an investment and hence the returns of the Fund. As a result of the assessment of the impact of sustainability risks on the returns of the Fund, the Sub-Investment Manager aims to identified that the Fund may be exposed to sustainability risks and will aim to mitigate those risks.

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For all definitions of the financial terms used within this document, please refer to the glossary on our website:
https://www.heptagon-capital.com/glossary

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