

Alumnus Ken Kroner Gives \$1M to Align Academic Research with Financial Decision Making

What is the optimal investment strategy if people live beyond 100, yet retire at 65-70? How will diversity and inclusion affect a company's performance? Should investments in global warming and renewable energy funds be ramped up for pension funds?

For the first time at the University of California San Diego, academia will collaborate with the asset management industry to find answers to these and other financial questions. The Kroner Family Foundation, directed by UC San Diego alumnus Ken Kroner and his wife, Jennifer, has launched the Pacific Center for Asset Management (PCAM) with a \$1 million lead gift to provide unbiased, in-depth research to assist in financial decision making. The gift contributes to the Campaign for UC San Diego.



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Kroner is chair of the [Campaign for UC San Diego](#). The campus recently announced achieving a \$2 billion fundraising milestone, the youngest university in the nation to do so. Through the Campaign for UC San Diego—the university-wide comprehensive fundraising effort concluding in 2022—the university is enhancing student support, ensuring student success, transforming the campus, connecting the community, and redefining medicine and health care on a global scale. Ken and Jennifer Kroner are generous donors to UC San Diego, including gifts to support graduate fellowships in the Division of Social Sciences, among other campus initiatives.

The institute, a partnership between UC San Diego's Rady School of Management and the Division of Social Sciences, will steer academic research agendas toward topics of concern to asset owners—including sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, foundations and their beneficiaries.

“UC San Diego is among the first research universities to actually have academics focus on the broad, high level problems that asset owners care about,” said Kroner, who has built a successful finance career in both industry and academia. “Asset owners generally don’t have the resources or the time to find solutions. And asset managers may have alternative agendas, such as selling product.”

Kroner offers an example: “One issue that asset owners face is the ‘retirement problem.’ There is a need for research on how fast retirees should spend their money. As a retiree, if you spend it too fast, you run out of money before you die. If you spend it too slow, your lifestyle is less than it could be. How many of the retired—or soon to be retired—Americans you know have the data to solve that problem? The answer is pretty close to zero. But academia has the data, the expertise, the knowledge and the tools to answer the ‘retirement problem’ and so much more. The Pacific Center for Asset Management is all about aligning academic research with what asset owners care about.”

The center is a campus partnership

PCAM is housed at the Rady School of Management in collaboration with the Division of Social Sciences. The center is co-directed by Michael Melvin, executive director of the Master of Finance program at the Rady School, and Graham Elliott, professor and chair of the Department of Economics in the Division of Social Sciences.

“There is a social crisis looming in the future: the lack of adequate retirement incomes for a massive wave of retirees,” said Melvin. “Academic research has not focused on this issue, yet has the right expertise to contribute to the social good and improve living standards for retirees. The Pacific Center for Asset Management will support independent, high quality academic research that will help pension funds meet the future needs of their beneficiaries.”

Elliott added, “PCAM will help align the research agenda of academia with the needs of asset owners. By facilitating interactions between the two groups, they will advance relevant research and discover solutions to pressing, practical questions. Examples include the retirement problem, the investment impact of climate change and how to better manage risk in a retirement portfolio.”

While PCAM will be housed at UC San Diego, the center will work with academic affiliates at many other campuses across the University of California and other institutions in the western U.S.

A PCAM advisory council has been established, comprised of influential asset owners who will come together annually to discuss, debate and define the center’s research agenda. Council members include: Advisory Council Chair Chris Ailman, California State Teachers’ Retirement System (CalSTRS); Stefan Dunatov, British Columbia Investment Management Corporation (BCI); Rodney June, Los Angeles City Employees’ Retirement System (LACERS); Molly Murphy, Orange County Employees Retirement System (OCERS); Steve Sexauer, San Diego County Employees Retirement Association (SDCERA); and Betty Tse, Alameda County Employees’ Retirement Association (ACERA).

Ken Kroner: a global finance innovator

As chief executive officer of Pluribus Labs, Kroner leads a global equity investment management firm built to capitalize on the intersection of economics, finance, data science and algorithms. Previously, he was senior managing director at BlackRock, where he was the head of multi-asset strategies and scientific active equities. He served on BlackRock's global executive and global operating committees. Prior to BlackRock, Kroner worked at Barclays Global Investors (BGI), which was acquired by BlackRock in 2009. At BGI, he oversaw asset allocation, hedge funds and client solutions businesses.

He began his career as an economics and finance professor at the University of Arizona. Kroner has a B.Sc. in mathematics and economics from the University of Alberta and a Ph.D. in economics from the University of California San Diego. He serves or has served on several corporate, academic, and foundation boards as well as academic journal editorial boards. His research on forecasting volatility and asset returns has been widely published in both academic and practitioner journals.

To learn more about the UC San Diego Pacific Center for Asset Management, visit their [website](#) or email pcam@ucsd.edu.



Ken Kroner

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