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**April 14**

**Insights from the Buy-Side to Win the Competition for Capital**

**Register**

**May 14**

**Communicating the Deal: Tips from IR's Best Leaders**

**Register**

**June 14**

**NIRI-Chicago Annual Meeting and Boat Cruise**

**Register**

**June 14-17**

**NIRI Annual Conference IR in Motion**

**Register**

## Photo of the Month



Julia Sweeney and Stephanie Buckles advised March program attendees on developing leadership skills.

**Check Out NIRI-Chicago's Mobile App**

### From the President



Let me begin by focusing attention on the robust transaction climate, which has implications for our immediate jobs and long-term career paths. The first quarter of 2015 included two major announcements impacting local companies and NIRI-Chicago members, with Pfizer agreeing to buy Lake Forest-based Hospira and Heinz agreeing to buy Northfield-based Kraft. This only emphasizes the need

for IR professionals to continue developing broad, transferable skill sets in order to navigate and succeed in today's fluid business environment.

Our March mini-workshop on [Leadership Skills: The Critical Piece of the Puzzle](#) was well-attended and "spot on." The key takeaway is that it's a smart career move to chart a path to become an influencer and critical member of the leadership team. If you missed the program, you can find the [presentation](#), [handouts](#) and a [summary](#) of advice from panelists Beth Coronelli, Aaron Hoffman and Chris Hodges on the NIRI-Chicago website.

Our focus will change from the personal to the global on April 14, with an evening program on [Insights From the Buy-Side to Win the Competition for Capital](#). To name just three trends: Long-term investors have shorter investment horizons, activism is on the rise, and foreign issuers are increasingly competing for U.S. capital. Panelists Judson Brooks of Harris Associates and Sarah Soni of Achievement Asset Management will be joined by Victoria Sivrais to provide the buy-side perspective on how your company can effectively compete for capital and differentiate itself in the current landscape. We will host NIRI's new president Jim Cudahy at the event, so this promises to be an interesting evening not to be missed. [Register](#).

Looking ahead to May, many of us have first-hand experience with M&A as a core growth strategy for our companies -- a consequence of low interest rates and an economy where organic growth is very hard to achieve. Mark your calendars now for our May 14 program on [Communicating the Deal: Tips from the Trenches](#). More detail on the program is available on our website. [Register](#).

On a lighter note, let's talk March Madness. The smart money may be on Kentucky, but my money is where my heart is -- or to be more exact, where my son is, which is Michigan State. I'll take my chances they make the national championship. Go

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Spartans!

Finally, we are already turning our thoughts to planning for the upcoming NIRI-Chicago program year. Please email or call me if you would like to become more involved or have an idea for a program. As we strive to be able to offer value to all our members, we welcome your input, perspectives and participation

Regards,

[Lisa Micou Meers](#), CFA  
NIRI-Chicago President

## NIRI Annual Conference

Some of you have already signed up for the NIRI Annual Conference right here in Chicago this June. If you're still on the fence, let us name-drop: Chicago's own Rick Santelli, CNBC on-air editor . . . Ken Griffin, founder of Citadel . . . Jason Schenker, chief economist of Prestige Economics . . . Dominic Barton, global managing director of McKinsey & Company. These are just four examples of the caliber of speakers at the upcoming conference. (And we NIRI-Chicagoans can vouch for how much fun it was to hear a keynote from Rick Santelli, whether you agree with him or not). [More information](#).

## In the News

- Bad news that's good for stocks: Citigroup [Economic Surprise Index](#)
- Only a few possess "the rare combination of intelligence, competence, savvy, flexibility, and luck" to go out on top: when senior executives [fail](#)
- Fighting the "immediate gratification" [investor](#)
- [Proxy access](#): it's inevitable
- [S&P 500 returns](#) set multi-year highs in 2014 but investment-grade [bond credit quality](#) will suffer as companies channel more money to future dividends and buybacks.
- When is a [hedge fund](#) not a hedge fund? When it's a private partnership or alternative asset manager.

## NIRI-Chicago Member News

Welcome to NIRI-Chicago's newest member: **Greg Burns**, senior manager, Allstate.

Congratulations to **Pat Macellaro**, who was promoted to vice president, investor relations at Allstate.

[Share](#) your news (job changes, awards, interesting articles) -- and thanks for reading the MEMBER CONNECTION.

*Maryellen Thielen*  
Vice President, Communications  
NIRI-Chicago