



# Universal Corporation (UVV)

Updated February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 by Jonathan Weber

## Key Metrics

<b>Current Price:</b>	\$50	<b>5 Year CAGR Estimate:</b>	5.5%	<b>Market Cap:</b>	\$1.2B
<b>Fair Value Price:</b>	\$43	<b>5 Year Growth Estimate:</b>	2.5%	<b>Ex-Dividend Date:</b>	04/09/20
<b>% Fair Value:</b>	115%	<b>5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:</b>	-2.8%	<b>Dividend Payment Date:</b>	05/04/20
<b>Dividend Yield:</b>	6.1%	<b>5 Year Price Target</b>	\$49	<b>Years Of Dividend Growth:</b>	48
<b>Dividend Risk Score:</b>	C	<b>Retirement Suitability Score:</b>	A	<b>Last Dividend Increase:</b>	1.3%

## Overview & Current Events

Universal Corporation is the world's largest leaf tobacco exporter and importer. The company is the wholesale purchaser and processor of tobacco that operates between farms and the companies that manufacture cigarettes, pipe tobacco, and cigars. Universal Corporation was founded in 1886, is headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, and trades with a market capitalization of \$1.2 billion. With 48 years of dividend increases, Universal Corporation is a Dividend Champion.

Universal Corporation reported its third quarter (fiscal 2020) earnings results on February 4. The company generated revenues of \$505 million during the quarter, which was 20.6% less than the revenues that Universal Corporation generated during the previous year's quarter. Management explains that revenues were mainly down due to large carryover crop volumes, which had boosted results for the previous year's quarter. Management also believes that this headwind will cease to exist during the fourth quarter of the current fiscal year.

Universal's earnings-per-share totaled \$1.04 during the third quarter, which was down about 6% from the earnings-per-share that the company generated during the previous year's quarter. Profits were down mainly due to the impact of lower sales during the quarter, partially offset by higher margins. Although results during Q2 and Q3 were better than those during the weak first quarter, 2020 still looks like it will be a down year for Universal.

## Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year <sup>1</sup>	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2025
<b>EPS</b>	\$5.68	\$5.30	\$3.25	\$4.66	\$5.25	\$4.06	\$3.92	\$3.97	\$3.96	\$4.45	<b>\$3.95</b>	<b>\$4.47</b>
<b>DPS</b>	\$1.86	\$1.90	\$1.94	\$1.98	\$2.02	\$2.06	\$2.10	\$2.12	\$2.16	\$3.00	<b>\$3.04</b>	<b>\$3.36</b>
<b>Shares<sup>2</sup></b>	24.3	23.2	23.3	23.3	23.2	22.7	25.3	24.9	25.1	25.1	<b>24.5</b>	<b>22.5</b>

Universal Corporation's earnings-per-share during fiscal 2019 were lower than the earnings-per-share that Universal generated during fiscal 2010, almost a full decade earlier. There were some movements in Universal's earnings-per-share during the last couple of years, but without a clear direction. Earnings grew in some years and declined in other years, to essentially offset each other. Overall Universal Corporation's results during the last decade were not convincing, as the company's track record in terms of earnings growth is weak.

As the leader in a declining industry, we do not expect the company to deliver strong business growth for the foreseeable future. The company's earnings-per-share growth could be a different story, though. Universal Corporation's shares trade at a rather inexpensive valuation, and that has been true for the majority of the last decade. Universal Corporation also does not need to invest meaningful amounts of money into its business, as the industry is not experiencing any meaningful growth. This gives Universal Corporation the ability to utilize a substantial amount of its free cash flows for share repurchases. Through a declining share count, Universal Corporation should be able to deliver some earnings-per-share growth during the coming years. We believe that an annual earnings-per-share growth rate in the low-single-digits is possible for this tobacco corporation, largely due to the possibility of buybacks. Investors will have to stomach the regular ups and downs in Universal's profitability, though.

<sup>1</sup> Note: Universal Corporation's fiscal year ends on March 31 of the calendar year. Example: fiscal 2018 ended on March 31, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> In Millions

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## Valuation Analysis

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Now	2025
Avg. P/E	7.4	7.9	13.0	10.6	10.5	12.5	14.3	16.3	16.0	13.0	<b>12.7</b>	<b>11.0</b>
Avg. Yld.	4.4%	4.5%	4.6%	4.0%	3.7%	4.2%	4.0%	3.5%	3.4%	5.2%	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>

Universal Corporation traded at very low valuations during and following the last financial crisis, but shares became more expensive during the last couple of years. Today, shares trade at roughly 13 times fiscal 2020's net profits. This represents a discount versus how Universal Corporation's shares were valued in 2016-2018, but shares are still more expensive than our fair value estimate of 11 times its annual net profits.

## Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2025
Payout	32.7%	35.8%	59.7%	42.5%	38.5%	50.7%	53.6%	54.8%	49.7%	67.4%	<b>77.0%</b>	<b>75.1%</b>

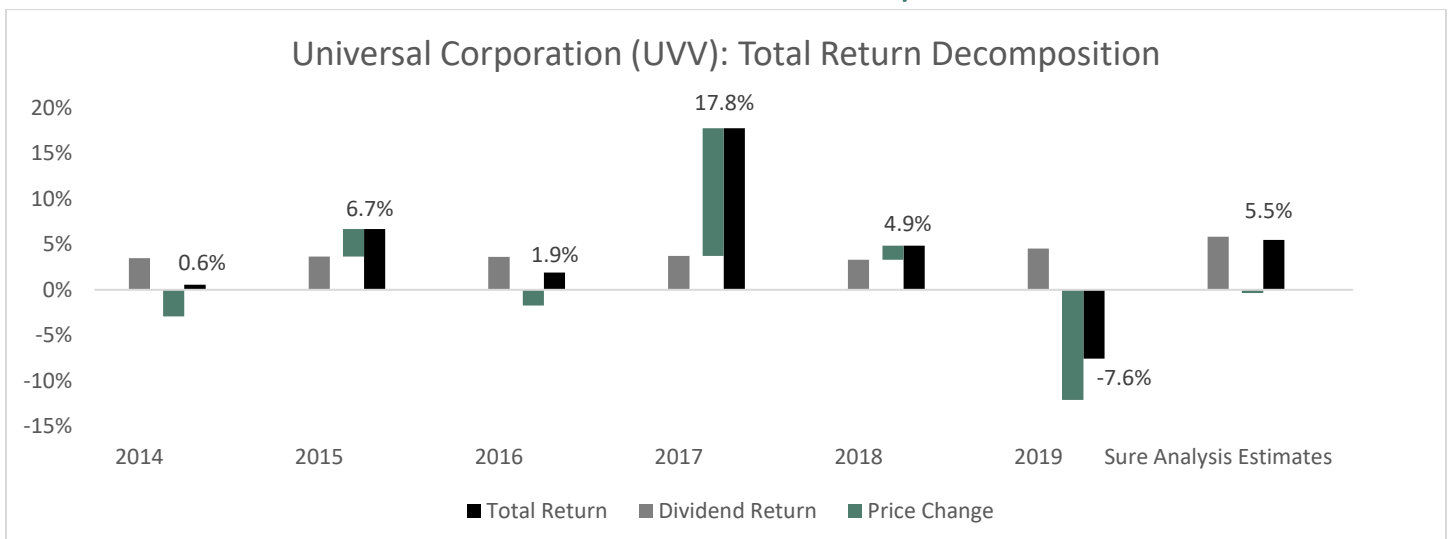
Universal Corporation has paid out roughly 50% of its net profits throughout most of the last decade, although there were significant swings both up and down during that time frame. The dividend increase in 2018, which was the result of management's strategic review and which lifted Universal Corporation's dividend by 36%, has made the dividend payout ratio jump to a significantly higher level. Earnings can be quite cyclical, which is why it is possible that Universal Corporation's dividend payout ratio rises above 100% during one of its weaker years. For now, the dividend still looks well-covered, but there is not as much wiggle room as there was in the past.

Universal Corporation is active in an industry that has seen its peak. This means that its growth outlook on a company-wide basis is not positive, but on the other hand, this means that there is no need for large investments, which results in relatively high free cash generation. On top of that, the company does not have to worry about new market entrants.

## Final Thoughts & Recommendation

Universal Corporation does not have a convincing growth track record, but thanks to share repurchases the company could still generate low-single-digit earnings-per-share growth going forward. Shareholders get an above-average dividend yield, but Universal still earns a sell recommendation at current prices, due to a valuation in excess of our fair value estimate, and due to the fact that the total return outlook is not very convincing.

## Total Return Breakdown by Year



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## Income Statement Metrics

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Revenue</b>	2492	2572	2447	2462	2542	2272	2120	2071	2034	2227
<b>Gross Profit</b>	542	508	472	462	433	410	407	395	372	407
<b>Gross Margin</b>	21.8%	19.8%	19.3%	18.8%	17.0%	18.1%	19.2%	19.1%	18.3%	18.3%
<b>SG&amp;A Exp.</b>	285	259	252	235	262	250	227	212	200	225
<b>D&amp;A Exp.</b>	43	45	44	45	39	35	37	36	35	37
<b>Operating Profit</b>	257	269	241	227	253	173	184	183	171	181
<b>Operating Margin</b>	10.3%	10.4%	9.9%	9.2%	9.9%	7.6%	8.7%	8.8%	8.4%	8.1%
<b>Net Profit</b>	168	157	92	133	149	115	109	106	106	104
<b>Net Margin</b>	6.8%	6.1%	3.8%	5.4%	5.9%	5.0%	5.1%	5.1%	5.2%	4.7%
<b>Free Cash Flow</b>	105	15	162	204	-49	169	139	215	49	126
<b>Income Tax</b>	86	78	61	66	76	38	54	57	51	41

## Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Total Assets</b>	2371	2228	2267	2306	2271	2188	2231	2123	2169	2133
<b>Cash &amp; Equivalents</b>	246	141	262	368	164	249	319	284	234	298
<b>Accounts Receivable</b>	279	346	391	402	468	434	429	439	377	368
<b>Inventories</b>	865	791	735	681	707	699	698	634	749	699
<b>Goodwill &amp; Int. Ass.</b>	106	100	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	98
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	1243	1028	1061	1018	860	791	778	797	783	753
<b>Accounts Payable</b>	6	4	188	226	212	140	121	154	164	146
<b>Long-Term Debt</b>	607	564	537	498	419	430	435	428	415	423
<b>Shareholder's Equity</b>	910	973	970	1046	1165	1151	1203	1286	1342	1337
<b>D/E Ratio</b>	0.54	0.48	0.45	0.40	0.30	0.32	0.31	0.33	0.31	0.32

## Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Return on Assets</b>	7.5%	6.8%	4.1%	5.8%	6.5%	5.1%	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%	4.8%
<b>Return on Equity</b>	19.5%	16.6%	9.5%	13.2%	13.5%	9.9%	9.3%	8.5%	8.0%	7.8%
<b>ROIC</b>	10.3%	8.9%	5.3%	7.5%	8.2%	6.3%	5.9%	5.8%	5.9%	5.8%
<b>Shares Out.</b>	24.3	23.2	23.3	23.3	23.2	22.7	25.3	24.9	25.1	25.1
<b>Revenue/Share</b>	84.00	89.02	86.34	86.44	89.54	80.50	76.20	87.14	79.74	87.92
<b>FCF/Share</b>	3.53	0.52	5.70	7.15	-1.74	5.99	5.01	9.03	1.93	4.96

Note: All figures in millions of U.S. Dollars unless per share or indicated otherwise.

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