Distinguished Alumni Award
Honoring
Jennifer Steans ’85
June 6, 2015

Davidson maintains an unwavering commitment to educational excellence and access for all talented students. But in order for students to attain the exceptional educational experience Davidson promises, financial, socioeconomic and cultural barriers must be addressed and eliminated.

In her life and work, Jennifer Steans has demonstrated a passion for breaking down barriers to educational achievement and thus exemplifies the very mission of alma mater.

After graduating from Davidson, she went on to teach high school math and later to earn a master’s degree in business administration from Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management. She began her career in the finance sector as a consultant for Deloitte & Touche, but was attracted to the opportunity to become involved in her family’s business, co-founding with her father in 1994 Financial Investments Corp., a Chicago-based real estate and venture capital investment firm. She also has served on the board of the Chicago Foundation for Women, and is a past chair of Leadership Greater Chicago, a program to develop civic leaders from diverse backgrounds.

As a student Jennifer majored in mathematics, but her ability to examine all facets of a problem and appreciate its complexities has perhaps been best put to use through her involvement with the Steans Family Foundation. Clearly, the work of the Foundation is close to Jennifer’s heart. Created in 1986 to offer a class of 35 sixth graders mentoring and college scholarships through the I Have a Dream program, the Foundation currently partners with North Lawndale, a struggling Chicago neighborhood. By providing sustained investment, the Foundation seeks to revitalize the community from within. Through this approach, Jennifer and her family have committed to making change, one neighborhood, one family at a time. Through her many roles within the Foundation—asset manager, convener, catalyst, advocate and grantmaker—Jennifer has guided the evolution of the Foundation into a powerful force for good and a vehicle through which individuals can develop their full potential.

The Foundation is rooted in the Steans family’s belief that with great privilege comes great responsibility; Jennifer has fully embraced that philosophy. Through her involvement in the I Have a Dream program and the Steans Family Foundation, Jennifer has enriched the lives of families and children who will provide leadership in their communities and beyond, and who will likely pay it forward by lending a hand to those in need.

For your unwavering dedication to social justice and access to education, and your outstanding personal and professional accomplishments that make you a role model for Davidson students, we honor you, Jennifer, with the Distinguished Alumni Award on the occasion of the 30th Reunion of the Class of 1985.