It must be particularly gratifying for Janet Swanson to read the news that the graduation rate among student-athletes in the United States is at an all-time high. “Education first” was her mantra as a Northeastern Hall of Fame swimming coach.

“When I was coaching, I used to tell my team that there was no such thing as a professional swimmer,” says Swanson, a four-sport Double Husky.

To ensure the success of future female athletes, Swanson, BB’74, MS’76, has made a substantial donation to support both her passions. When she became the first donor in Northeastern history to make a six-figure gift to women’s athletics last year, she apportioned part of the gift to educational programs and part to varsity swimming.

But Swanson was always a pioneer.

As a coach, she founded the varsity women’s rowing program, which she says is her proudest accomplishment in a career decorated with accolades. Long before cross-training became the rage, Swanson strengthened her oarswomen in the pool, transforming a club team she headed in 1975 into a varsity team in 1977.

That same year, she was tapped to head the newly launched men’s and women’s swimming teams, thus embarking on a storied coaching career. She earned the title of New England Intercollegiate Division I Coach of the Year for both teams in the ‘80s. In 1991, she was named women’s North Atlantic Conference Coach of the Year.

She remains a staunch university advocate, even after retiring 23 years ago. To this day, she says, “the co-op program molded me into who I became. And I’m inspired by President Aoun’s leadership and Peter Roby’s management of the athletics department.”

With her gift, the beloved coach will create opportunities for other female student-athletes, in turn, to inspire and lead.