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Introduction of President Haas, delivered at the University Club on May 11, 2016

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Being president of Grand Valley is a varied and complex job. Each day President Haas throws several balls into the air and juggles them; and he cannot afford to drop any of them. He must make sure the legislature and the governor listen to Grand Valley’s case for public support. Grand Valley has earned an enviable reputation as an institution of higher academic quality and it is his responsibility to see that the university fills open positons with people who can maintain that high quality level.

Grand Valley has 25,500 students and still more qualified students see admissions. Even though it is a large university, he seeks to maintain a small college atmosphere for the undergraduates. That takes thought, good relations with students, and a lot of time listening on his part. The faculty and staff need more space to carry out their
tasks effectively. He must let potential donors know about those needs and persuade them to give the money to meet them.

Not only in academic but in athletics, Grand Valley has distinguished itself. That does not happen without the president’s support. He must watch and respond, and when you see him at an athletic contest, and he attends many, you can see his engagement. Why does he do all these things? Because his major interest is the education of students. He loves the students and the students love him. They call him T. Haas and crowd around him for selfies. He has his priorities right. Students first. That is why universities like Grand Valley exist. He gets it.

He is the son of a New York City cop from Staten Island; one of the city’s five boroughs. He decided not to be a policeman, but he must have liked something about professions that serve and protect the
public, so he went to the Coast Guard Academy. In his career he rose to the rank of Captain, and commanded his own ship. On duty in Michigan he met Marcia, whom he later married. He pursued his career at graduate school earning a Ph.D. in chemistry at the University of Connecticut. The Coast Guard appointed him to its faculty where he became the Chief Academic Officer. He served briefly as Vice President of Student Affairs at William Penn College in Iowa. He became President of the State University of New York at Cobleskill before he was lured to Grand Valley ten years ago where he and Marcia have found their home. I am sure it gives him pleasure to address a group in support of student scholarships at a club that has initiated a scholarship program; unusual for such an organization. I present to you a very ________ guy, President Thomas Haas of Grand Valley State University.