Southeastern Illinois College math and science majors were in for a treat recently as Robert Holmes, Ph.D., National Flood Hazard Specialist and Coordinator for the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) came to speak to students during a special Math & Science Grad-Talk luncheon organized by math instructor, Kim Martin.

Dr. Holmes, a Harrisburg native and distinguished alumnus of SIC, presented his reflections upon his science career. He pointed out to students some key traits to learn in order to be successful – being adaptive and being well-rounded.

“Dr. Holmes’ presentation was very motivational and included wise and specific recommendations for success in college and career,” said Martin. “All of our math and science majors, at this point, are in a position to pursue something like this, if they choose, and all agreed that Dr. Holmes’ inspired them to focus even more on their goals and their studies. I am grateful that this very successful Math & Science alumnus was willing to return to SIC and share experiences with our students.”

Meredith Wolf, freshmen biology major from Harrisburg explains, “Dr. Holmes really stressed the importance of being well-rounded and able to adapt. He used personal work examples throughout his career that included anything from working on construction sites to sitting in an office. You must be able to work outside your comfort zone to find a job and keep one that you love.”

Dr. Holmes has an Associate of Science degree from Southeastern Illinois College, bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Civil Engineering from the University of Missouri-Rolla and a doctorate in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the University of Illinois.

Dr. Robert Holmes serves as the National Flood Hazard Specialist and Coordinator for the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS). Additionally he holds academic appointments as an Adjunct Professor of Civil Engineering at the Missouri University of Science and Technology, and an Adjunct Professor of Civil Engineering at the University of Illinois.

As the USGS National Flood Specialist, Dr. Holmes serves as lead flood scientist for U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) operational and scientific endeavors nationwide, including serving as a senior advisor on flood issues to the USGS Director and Associate Directors. He also represents the USGS as a flood expert internationally. Prior to taking his current position in 2008, he served for 9 years as the Director of the USGS Illinois Water Science Center in Urbana, Illinois.