SIC Alumnus and Director of Monsanto Speaks to Math and Science Majors

Southeastern Illinois College math and science majors were in for a treat on Friday, April 12, as Stefan Bledig, Ph.D., Director of Technology Alliances for Monsanto Company in St. Louis, came to speak to the students during a special Math & Science Grad-Talk luncheon organized by math instructor, Kim Martin.

Bledig, an Eldorado native and distinguished alumnus of SIC, presented Reflections on a Science Career. He gave students the keys to success that he has discovered in his years of study – preparation, passion, pliability and persistence. He encouraged students to prepare now to be able to recognize opportunities when they arise, and to discover their passion to follow those opportunities.

“You are in the preparation stages now, and are building the foundation for your future,” said Bledig. “I couldn’t be happier in the foundation I began here at SIC.”

Dr. Stefan Bledig completed his undergraduate education at the University of Illinois, where he graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in biology. In 1995, he earned a Ph.D. in molecular biology from the University of Warwick in England - where his doctoral research focused on the genetic regulation of central carbon metabolism in E. coli. In addition, Stefan holds an M.B.A. from Northwestern University’s Kellogg Graduate School of Management - with majors in finance, marketing, and international business.

Stefan’s industrial work experience includes a variety of research and technology management roles during his 26-year tenure with the Monsanto Company. He began his career with Monsanto in 1987 as a research molecular biologist with the company’s NutraSweet Division near Chicago. His research while at NutraSweet focused on the genetic enhancement of bacteria to improve process efficiency of large-scale phenylalanine fermentation.

In 1997, Stefan joined Monsanto’s Agriculture Division in St. Louis to lead a research team focused on the enhancement of protein and oil quality in corn and soybeans. He next served as a project manager with responsibility for the early-stage development of transgenic soybean traits, including herbicide tolerance, insect protection via Bt technology, and improved oil quality. Stefan is currently Monsanto’s Director of Technology Alliances and has responsibility for negotiating and managing the company’s technology partnerships and research collaborations with corporate, academic, and not-for-profit institutions.
Martin said “Stefan and I have good memories from our time here at SIC as math/science majors. I was pleased with his willingness to come and encourage our students to work hard in classes now to not only learn as much of the content as possible, but also to develop into mathematical and scientific problem solvers. The educational and career experiences that he shared with everyone were fascinating and very motivational.”