ANDY RHEAUME came to UW Bothell’s School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences (IAS) as a single father eager to complete his bachelor’s degree. As an environmental science major, he learned the ins and outs of complex and evolving ecosystems, gaining a broad base of knowledge and skills that formed a solid foundation for his career in municipal utilities.

In 2016, after four years on the Bothell City Council, he won re-election and was appointed as mayor by his council colleagues.

As a scientist, policy planner, city councilmember and environmental advocate, Andy works with a wide variety of stakeholders. He credits his interdisciplinary education and the way it challenged him to engage with other students and faculty as formative influences that helped him become a bridge-builder across groups.

“I work closely with engineers, scientists and policy planners. Those three groups don’t always communicate that well. But the background I have from IAS gives me an understanding of how all three of those areas work,” Andy says.

Andy’s background in watershed ecology has informed his work on the council, where he’s focused on everything from transportation issues to the recovery of the area’s Chinook salmon population.

He began his career in environmental science as a program coordinator for the City of Redmond’s Stormwater Utility after graduating in 2004. Later, as a senior scientist for Seattle Public Utilities, he designed tests to study sources of highly toxic chemicals in the stormwater system.

Now he balances his part-time role as Bothell’s mayor with his “day job” as senior planner for Redmond’s Stormwater Utility. It’s a role that challenges him to think long-term about a host of environmental management issues, while drafting the city’s many codes and regulations, and communicating why it all matters to his constituents.

“Being a technical person who knows how to communicate is a huge asset to a municipal corporation,” Andy says. “I owe that to my IAS experience. It’s like a Swiss Army knife degree. It doesn’t give you just one tool. It makes you well-rounded.”