Strategies for Success in Chemistry

Although every person learns and organizes information in a different way, here are some general study strategies taken from an article by Sandra Y. McGuire at LSU.

- **Pre-read information before it is discussed in class.** It is helpful to have an idea of the major ideas and vocabulary before a topic is discussed in class.

- **Go to class and participate actively.** Of course I expect to see you in class, but dozing through a class is not much better than not going at all. Be prepared to work in groups on problem-solving and to ask and answer questions.

- **Review and process notes as soon as possible after class.** Look over the notes as soon as possible after class. This way, you can clear up any confusion about a concept before a small misunderstanding becomes the shaky cornerstone of a more complicated problem.

- **Work assigned homework problems as soon as possible.** The goal of homework problems is to learn how to solve them. So, it is not beneficial to page back in the chapter to find a similar example problem, then simply substitute your numbers for the ones in the example. Instead, try this approach:
  
  - Review the information from class relevant to the problem.
  - Treat the example problems in the textbook as practice problems: cover the answer and try to solve them. If you get stuck, look at the answer to try to figure out where you went wrong. Then try the problem directly following the example problem.
  - Work practice problems without help from your notes or the textbook. Don't check your answer until you have completed the problem.

- **Use intense study sessions.** No one can effectively study during an eight hour all-nighter. Instead, study **every day** in small focused bursts:
  
  - Set a goal: for example understanding one topic or type of problem.
  - Work to accomplish that goal (for about 40 minutes).
  - Review what you learned (about 10 minutes).
  - Take a break (around 10 minutes).
  - Repeat – with chemistry or another class.