CIS67 Helpful Hints for Success in This or Any Online Class

1. **Do you know your unique learning style?** Are you a good candidate for distance learning—are you disciplined, responsible, an independent learner, computer savvy, have good communication skills, dependable, professional? Be aware of what works best for you and do it! Is it communicating with your classmates via a discussion board, is it taking extensive notes and sifting through them later, is it doing extensive hands-on practice, etc.?

2. **Schedule your own "class time**." Be sure that you have time to take a distance learning course. While these courses are convenient, they do require time and **the ability and willingness to learn and study independently**. You should schedule time several hours each week to work on your distance course and adhere to that schedule just like you would attend an on-campus class. If you're taking an online course, plan to spend considerable time online. You will need to log into the course web site several times each week to keep current with assignments, announcements, and discussion forums. You will also need to check your e-mail and announcements frequently for messages from your instructor or from other class members.

3. **Refer to your Lab Assignment Schedule and read the material BEFORE starting each assignment.** Even a very quick skimming will make the material easier to understand, and you will remember it longer. Also refer to the Unit Objectives at the beginning of each chapter, and the Summary, Key Concepts, and Key Terms at the end of each chapter so you know what to look for as you read.

4. **Keep up with the assignment schedule.** Complete your assigned homework on a regular basis and submit all assignments promptly, as no late assignments are accepted, no exceptions.

5. **Review reading material and practice tutorial skills in a hands-on environment ASAP!** Take notes as your read the text. Rewriting the material in your own words will help you more easily begin the hands-on assignments. Studies have shown that the longer you wait to review material and practice skills, the less you remember and retain. After a 24-hour period 50% of what you read can be lost.

6. **Have a regularly scheduled time each day to practice, complete hands-on exercises, and work on lab assignments**.   Plan for at least 8-10 hours per week to complete your assignments. Use a calendar and set up a regular time for learning concepts, for doing homework problems, for interpreting and for practicing your computer and business skills. Keep notepaper in your textbook or use a journal to jot down questions you need to clarify either with a classmate (use the discussion board) or your instructor.

7. **Study groups can be very helpful to most students, even online study groups can be beneficial**. Initially study and practice the material on your own and make a list of your own questions. Then discuss the material and your questions with a study group. How do you know if you understand the material? Can you explain and demonstrate it clearly to someone else, if so, you know it! Word of advice: Your lab assignments, midterm and final projects are done individually so make sure you thoroughly understand and comprehend the material for yourself.

8. **Invest in time with a tutor if you feel you need extra help**. Tutoring does not mean you are not smart or unable to comprehend certain subjects. It means there is someone out there that can help you through some areas that you are not as strong in. Tutors should be available the second or third week of the semester. Studies have shown that working with a tutor on a regular basis usually results in better comprehension and a higher grade! Please take advantage of this resource.

9. **Refer to any Chapter Summaries or Outlines as a review for each chapter**. Use the "Hands-On Exercises" in each chapter as additional practice and review for your graded labs and projects.

10. **Use relaxation techniques to focus better**. Relaxation techniques can benefit learning in a number of was: heighten concentration, heighten attention focusing and lessen anxiety. Some common relaxation techniques include deep breathing, stretching, and soothing music.

11. **Find your most effective motivators**. What makes you persevere at a task? Do you get excited when you master a skill? Do you need a reward? Will promising yourself a pleasant diversion increase your concentration? e.g. "I'll study for two solid hours, and then I'll call my friend who's just back in town." Don't make the phone call before you study; it's too likely you'll wind up dropping the books for a good time with your friend. Remember the importance of sticking to a schedule. Pretend you really are in class when you are scheduled to do your course work.

12. **Follow all directions precisely and implicitly.** Use appropriate subject lines in your emails, label all assignments as directed, and pay specific attention to all details. See syllabus for guidelines.

13. **Always have a contingency plan, just in case your computer or internet goes down as deadlines are deadlines and they must be met**. See if a friend will let you use their system should the need arise. Perhaps the local library has a computer bank for public use. Go to the campus and use their computer labs. Many companies even offer an internet café for their employees to utilize during breaks. For your own benefit and peace of mind, become familiar with both PCs and MACs and different ISPs. Remember, tech problems occur "when," not "if."

14. **Online courses can be very convenient to students with jobs and families**. Many students fail to realize that online courses, in most cases, take much more of their time than classroom courses. They must allow the necessary time to complete the reading and assignments. Many students feel that they can take more than one course at a time because they want to complete their degree very quickly. This approach may work as long as everything in their life stays the same, but many students run into problems quickly if something in their life changes. Not every student is successful as an online student. There are students who do much better with the weekly class sessions where they can see the instructor and other students. Know your learning style.

Resources for Additional Success Strategies for Distance Learners:

http://www.stchas.edu/distance/studytips.shtml

http://www.worldwidelearn.com/education-articles/distance-learning-success.htm

http://www.uwsp.edu/natres/rwilke/eetap/Tips.htm

http://www.uhv.edu/webct/students/orientation/successtips.htm

http://www.goarticles.com/cgi-bin/showa.cgi?C=730840

http://technologysource.org/article/learner_success_in_distance_education_environments/

http://www.articleslist.net/education.asp?cid=734&c=2&articleid=2918

http://webcastlearning.blogspot.com/2007/11/five-action-oriented-success-strategies.html

http://lib.newpaltz.edu/distance/success.html

http://wcet.info/dlguide/ch6.asp