For students beginning Calculus II:

I've taught about a dozen sections of Calculus over the past several years. I've noticed that in a typical Calculus class of mine, most people do quite well, and a few are surprised when they do very badly. In hopes of having everyone succeed this semester, I offer you some advice.

Different people need different advice (for example, I wouldn't say the same thing to an overconfident student and to an underconfident student), and some people don't need any. I'm going to try to speak to the sort of people that tend to have trouble in my courses. Ironically, those of you who need it mostly likely don't realize that it's you, so listen up, just in case, you know?

Some of this is obvious: Consistent effort vs. catch-up. The former is much more effective, and in the long run, is a time-saver. This is true for everyone. Trust me. For example: Sleep enough. Attend every class. Follow the lecture actively. Start your homework immediately after class (if possible).

Work smarter - don't struggle for hours in a confused daze.

Life isn't fair, so you might have to work harder/smarter than others. You may have the feeling that "everyone" else has taken Calculus II before, that other sections of Calculus II have it easier, or even that other students are smarter than you. It doesn't matter. In the end, either you succeed or you don't. So no matter what advantages or disadvantages you start out with, you need to do enough to succeed, whatever your situation calls for. (There's a difference between recognizing your disadvantages in order to overcome them, and making your disadvantages an excuse for potential failure.) You are all capable of success in my class if you deal with the semester appropriately.

You just may learn something NEW. Not just new material, but similar to stuff in previous math classes. NEW. So new that you may have trouble recognizing that something is there at all. For example, at some point it may seem that I'm wasting time with something (like a proof) where it would be easier and more to the point to do it another way (via examples perhaps). This is because you probably still have an incomplete understanding of big questions, like, "What is calculus?" "What is mathematics?" "What's the point of 'proving' things / What's the meaning of 'proof'?" It takes time to develop such understanding. My point right now is to caution you that something is going to happen which may not make sense at first, but that you shouldn't dismiss it as nonsense or unimportant - it's just that it's so NEW that... anyway, have a little trust, and be prepared for conceptual revolution when it comes... about 1/3 of the way into the semester or so.