Heather (H): Hello and welcome to another edition of CareerCast brought to you by the Sam M. Walton College of Business Career Development Center. My name is Heather Sprandel and I’m joined today by Renee Clay who is also in the career center. Today’s topic is finding a job in a very tough economy. Let’s first talk about some things that we are hearing a lot about today, on the news and online, and in different newspapers. That basically the unemployment rate is climbing and the job market is getting harder and harder to enter into. So can you tell me Renee a little bit about unemployment and what it has looked like this summer?

Renee (R): Heather from the U.S. Department of Labor, their Bureau of Labor Statistics, the best way to start I think is with the July numbers and here are their July numbers. 43 states and the District of Columbia, over the month unemployment in the month of July, they reported an increase in unemployment rates in July. 6 states registered decreases and 1 state had no change. The overall national unemployment rate rose in July to 5.7%. That apparently is a full percentage point higher than one year earlier. The largest employment increases, and this is non-farm payroll employment increases were reported in Texas, Kentucky, in Kansas, in the District of Columbia, and in Tennessee. The largest employment decreases occurred in Florida, Georgia, Indiana, California, and Arizona. I’ll bet the listeners are wondering about Arkansas. The June 08 for Arkansas was unemployment rate of 5%, the July number, looks like, 4.5%. So a modest drop, very modest drop in Arkansas. But still a difficult level of unemployment.

H: That’s good news for Arkansans certainly, but when we get back to that number of 5.7% unemployment rate nationally. That is over 9 million people, in the United States, that are unemployed. So that is quiet a staggering number. Certainly we can face high unemployment here in Arkansas at some point if this trend continues. Are there some tips that you can share with our listeners on how you can survive a tough or even a recession economy.

R: Sure is Heather. The first tip that I would like to share with the listening audience is to do some good research about your particular options. Now’s the time to start taking a look at companies and how they are performing. Read as much as you can about a company and find out what they say they are doing to position themselves to survive a recession type economy. There are lots of information on the World Wide Web. Google it! Googling “Best Industries to Work in a Recession” or “Recession Jobs 2008”. You’ll uncover whole lists of articles that describe some recession proof sectors that students might want to target.

H: That’s Great! Do you think people sometimes have to change their focus?

R: One of the things that we advocate is not only just changing your focus, but maybe broadening your focus and I’ll elaborate a little bit on that. Changing focus is typically people, whether they are entering the job market for the first time or not, a job seeks first question in their own mind is “What’s in this for me.” But we want to start thinking about asking themselves from the other side of the table and lets think about what is in it for the employer, if they hire me. That bigger picture kind of mentality I think is very important. The other thing is when I said broaden the focus we really want to encourage you to look past even the boundaries of the state of Arkansas as places for employment. One of the things that we hear over and over from our recruiters is we love your students but really need them to move somewhere. And the more apt a student is to move, the more that they embrace moving, relocating, traveling as part of job. The greater they magnify their chances of finding something terrific. ‘
H: That’s Great! So then when a student then is in a competitive job market how do they sell themselves?

R: Well we try to get people to think results based. We try to get thinking of selling results and not necessarily a skill of a set of skills that they have. If you think results based then you’re going to be fine and results based means results based on a resume. When you are writing a resume, when you are helping to craft a resume we certainly want to help you with that. Think in terms of quantifying success in numbers, in numbers of people, numbers of things, percentage increases, numbers of quotas met, or sales goals met, or anything like that. Think of actions that you took and the results that the company received from those actions, instead of necessarily skills sets.

H: So basically students should consider themselves mini profit and loss centers, rather than just employees, is that right?

R: Exactly, we want them to start talking and thinking money. But we don’t necessarily mean salary because there kind of two ways to categorize an employee of an organization. You can be categorized as someone who helps make the money or who helps save the money. So one of the things that a student needs to start thinking about and this reflects back to thinking results based. Think of examples in jobs that you’ve worked either were your have helped save money for the organization or helped to make money. These can be very simple things; these don’t have to be sophisticated, complicated things. If you folded shirts in retail and you saw that the reds ones weren’t selling well and you suggested moving up a shelf and all of the sudden they started selling that’s results. And that is tangible results that employers are interested in. Because they’re really interested in people who are either going to help then make money or save money.

H: So does a student then have to rethink their current or past jobs to understand their position in basically the bigger corporate P & L picture. What are some questions that they would ask themselves so they can help define those achievements and then talk about those in an interview?

R: Step 1 is really the reassessment of what you did on that job. Because I think that students have a tendency to sell some things short, when they shouldn’t. Think this way, ask yourself something like this: “How did my particular work, what I did in my job, improving performance of my department, my company, my team? How many roles did I perform in that team in that department? How many roles did I perform that helped to save the company the expense of adding someone else?” We all know that companies do more with less. You probably did more than one job, maybe you were cross trained to do more than one job. Think about those kinds of things. “How has my work made the work of others easier, faster, more effective, more efficient?” And reassess all of the jobs that you have ever had, don’t discount any experience. But when you reassess think results based, think about quantifying success in numbers, and think about doing it by asking yourselves those four questions.

H: So, it sounds like your suggesting that students add achievements to their resume, is that right?

R: Achievements on a resume absolutely must be added, employers don’t hire employees they hire people to solve problems for them. That’s what they are looking for and when add achievements, when you add things to your resume that speak to your problem solving abilities, your critical thinking abilities, then it underscores for the employer that it is something that you can do and also encourages them to ask questions at time of interview about those particular experiences. So certainly add the achievements, thinking results based, to your resume and we would love to help you do that.
H: Well really the resume is a sales tool to help a student get a interview, is that right?

R: That’s all a resume really is. It’s a ticket in the door and then the interview is the next, and a separate part of the process. But in some ways you can kind of drive some of the things might be asked by the way your resume is crafted. And by what you have on that resume.

H: Well can you summarize then today’s topic for us.

R: We don’t want students to panic with all of the talk about recession. What we encourage students to do is to get busy sooner and faster than they ever have. So freshman we are talking to you and sophomores we are talking to you. And if you are a junior or senior we are certainly talking to you. You have to rethink your tactics. You have to put more effort into the process of getting to get a job or internship. And you absolutely must start now. Where ever you are in your academic process. You must start now and we in the career center in the Walton College would love to be able to help you put together a strategy to maximize all of the opportunities as you walk done your career path.

H: Because they can get a job in a recession economy, it just may be harder. So you need more time and energy to get it done.

R: It can be done, you just need a plan. And a plan and yes you will probably need more time. But it certainly can be done with a little proactive thinking and preparation and hard work.

H: That’s great! Well thank you for listening today about some tips to survive a recession economy and a tough job market. Some of this information I know Renee received from Careerbuilder.com and a recent article by Joe Turner who is a career coach. Thanks for listening and we’ll talk to you soon.