Hello! My name is Heather Sprandel and I’m joined today by Sara Yell and this is a career cast coming to you from the Sam M. Walton College of Business Career Development Center. Today’s career cast topic is the Pre Business Career Fair Networking Event coming up this fall 2008 and I think you have some questions for me right Sara that maybe we can help the Leadership Walton students understand what this event is and why they should participate, is that right?

Yes that’s right! First I just wanted to ask you, what is the Pre Business Career Fair Networking Event?

Well it’s a great opportunity for employers and organizations that are coming on campus this fall semester to do some recruiting, to interact with students. The only students that actually participate in the Pre Fair Networking Social Event are Leadership Walton students and current MBA students. So, this is a networking event and is the precursor or pre event to the main Business Career Fair Event that happens the next day. So! The business Career Fair is the next day on the 23rd. The Pre Fair Networking Event happens the evening before, September 22nd, 2008 from 5:30 to 7:30PM in the Alumni House on campus.

So who else will be attending this event?

Uumm…Employers, definitely, let me give you kind of a summary of some of the employers, list some of those that will be attending and wanting to visit with Leadership Walton students. Let’s see. I’ll just run through a couple of them. ABF Freight System, AT&T Mobility, Acxiom, Casestack, Cintas Corporation, Dillards, Colgate-Palmolive, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, General Mills, JB Hunt, JCPenney, Johnson and Johnson, MARS, Maverick, Nestle Purina, Rockfish, Saatchi & Saatchi X, Sam’s Club, Southwestern Energy, Target, Tyson, Walgreens, Walmart, a lot of great people are going to be there and that’s just to name a few of them.

Ok. And what is the purpose of Leadership Walton students attending this event?

Well as the long title this event implies, it’s a networking event and its core and Leadership Walton students need to interact and practice networking skills and definitely start engaging with employers early in their careers. But let’s talk about what the purpose of networking is. Really students have to realize that there is more to networking than just finding a job. Networking is an activity that takes place every day of our lives, whether job-related or not. Think of it this way. If you talk to someone at breakfast to review what might be on the upcoming exam? You’ve networked with that person to find out information. So when you talk with a professor and you reference
materials that might be coming up and when you’re preparing for a research paper, you’ve networked with that professor to get information. Same idea when you talk with a potential employer or a company that might interest you for an internship maybe in the future. You are sharing information about yourself and learning from that person and making the connection. So, Networking is already far more active in peoples lives than they probably thought. The key to making networking effective in your job search is to provide clear focus and direction. I have a few examples of objectives of how students can keep networking in their minds. 1. Be aware of your job search and career focus. Many Leadership Walton students are freshmen or sophomores and they may not be sure what their career focus is. That’s why an event like this where they can meet, socialize and learn from employers and professionals will help them as they start to decide upon their career path. And really this networking opportunity provides them the chance to communicate and learn about the job market as it stands today. They can increase their knowledge about particular career fields and industries, find out about potential employers, discover hidden job opportunities and really practice socializing. Socializing is important for people to be successful in their career paths, whatever those paths might be.

So how does someone work a room?

This is a big question and hard for people who are shy. Let me tell you how I would look at it and networking provides you an opportunity to get a lead on a job, gather intelligence and catch the special attention of a potential recruiter. And some people consider this the art of choosing. But that’s ok! But we need to learn how to do it because most of us are not born minglers. So practice and preparation will help students develop the skills it takes to be an effective networker and how to really make the most of this pre fair networking event. So, as difficult or awkward as it may feel at first the ability to make a positive impression on people and recruiters that will be at this event it’s very important that the careers advancing and developing. So we do have some suggestions on how the student gets started. If you’re shy, that’s understandable but you still do need to connect with employers. It’s very important that a student who is shy, or more introverted gets mentally geared up before they even show up to this event because your attitude often guides your behavior you have to overcome any negative self talk that could hinder you from reaching out to others. So questions to kind of ask yourself, or maybe you’re already asking your self actually, don’t ask yourself these questions, why should I bother trying to impress this person? I’m only 1 of 100 students that this recruiter is going to see today. You know, these negative thoughts kind of prevent you and will not help you push back through any social road
blocks that might be in your way. Really, you know, think of it like this, change your attitude from negative to positive and remember that people enjoy talking about themselves. Ask questions about the companies that these employers work for to get the conversation started. People feel flattered when you show interest in them, their work and their organization. And they will be more apt to reciprocate your demonstrations of sincere interest. You have more offers than you might think, you just have to believe that you do. If you walk into the pre-fair networking event thinking this is going to be horrible and not going to make a great connection and going to hide in a corner, you will. So go to the pre fair networking event with a positive attitude definitely.

So what you’re saying is that students should redefine what it means to interact with strangers?

That’s exactly right. When a student joins a new organization like Leadership Walton. A new student group. Right? A very unique student group, they may share some interest with some other students in Leadership Walton and others they don’t. That’s the same with a class group project they work on or someone they may live with or live around within the residence halls. A networking event is not really very different from them coming into contact with people they are not familiar with in their daily lives. What they need to do is take the initiative to approach others, introduce themselves, share a piece of information they could reveal something that they do have in common with this person. They need to be active listeners when talking with employers and strangers, new people. They have to show that they are interested so that communication is receptive on both ends. And they should use shared background or interests as the basis of sustaining conversations.

So should students prepare and practice their introductions?

Their self introductions to employers, definitely. To avoid being tongue tied when a student tries to start a conversation with someone they don’t know, they need to prepare a self introduction that is clear, interesting and well delivered. Students have to remember, what they say about themselves will depend on the nature of the event but in any case it shouldn’t take longer than 8 to 10 seconds. An example of how to introduce themselves in a natural, confident and smooth way is like this. Hello! My name is Heather Sprandel and I’m glad to have this chance to meet you and learn how developed your career opportunities over time. Thanks for sharing that with my friend. Maybe you have a friend standing next to you who this employer just spoke with but you haven’t been introduced yet. So go ahead and thank them for sharing that
information but make sure they know who you are. Or you could say something like: Hello! My name is Heather Sprandel, am a junior accounting major, looking to find out what it would be like to work in tax accounting, could you tell me more about it? Because you have to initiate conversation with those you are interested in talking with and you need to practice socializing. Again, getting back to the purpose of networking, your there to share information with them but also to learn from their professionalism, career paths and their industries. That’s why their here. Sharing information with you but its more about you as well.

So what should Leadership Walton students wear to this event?

This event, the pre fair business career fair networking event, what we are talking about right now is business casual at a minimum to attend this event. There will be people in business professional dress, that’s ok too, if you feel more comfortable. Definitely at the business career fair the next day you have to be in business casual for admittance into the fair. So what do I mean by business casual? Gentlemen will wear nice well pressed clothes. Khakis, dress pants, button down shirt or sweater if the weather warns it and no t-shirts, no jeans, no sneakers obviously. And ladies skirts at the knee or below, dress pants, suits, mixed sets that are appropriate for work wear, minimum makeup, jewelry, hair all that fun stuff. You want to be prepared. You are making a first impression and you want to look the part.

Ok. And do students need to bring their resumes?

Students can bring resumes to the pre-fair networking event but it’s not mandatory. Really, the resume dissemination will come the next day at the business career fair. But I don’t think there is anything wrong with students coming with a folder that may include some of their resumes because the conversation might lead to a point where an employer may ask for a students resume. So that’s ok. You can bring them. And actually if you’re in the job market looking for an internship, or full time position, you should carry resumes with you everywhere because as I mentioned earlier, networking happens all the time, so have resumes even in your back pack as your go to classes because you might have a guest speaker coming to class who might prompt your interest, you connect with them and share a resume at that time. Any other questions Sara that you might have?

I think you have answered all my questions. Thank you!

So you think students should attend this event as well don’t you?
Definitely. It sounds like a great opportunity.

Good. Well thanks for listening to today’s career cast. Again this is Heather Sprandel and Sara Yell at the Walton College Career Development Center encouraging all Leadership Walton students who can, attend the pre fair networking event. Definitely the Business Career Fair on the 23rd of September and also remind yourself that there will be another pre fair networking event and Business Career Fair in the spring of 2009. So thanks for listening. Bye Bye