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HEADLINE: Group meets at Clemson to promote advanced materials industry

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By Rudolph Bell STAFF WRITER February 18, 2009

* ITLE=Group meets at Clemson to promote advanced materials industry"* Share

CLEMSON -- Corporate researchers, investors, professors, entrepreneurs, attorneys and business developers gathered at Clemson University Tuesday to discuss ways of collaborating to develop the advanced materials industry and launch new businesses.

The first-of-its-kind forum was arranged by Swamp Fox LLC, a Greenville company that also organizes the annual InnoVenture venture capital conference. Swamp Fox founder John Warner said his company plans a bigger advanced materials conference in the fall that he hopes will draw international attention.

Advanced materials -- a broad category that includes myriad fields such as optics, nanotechnology and high-tech textiles -- is a Clemson specialty. It accounts for 30 percent of the university's research, more than any other area, said John Ballato, associate vice president for research and economic development.

"We wanted to bring together the players -- the academic players, the private-sector players and the public partners -- put them in one room and talk about the assets we have in place, the intellectual assets as well as the infrastructural assets," Ballato said.

Many of the speakers at Clemson's Madren Center had previously appeared at InnoVenture. They included top researchers with Milliken & Co. of Spartanburg, Michelin North America of Greenville and Zeus Industrial Products of Orangeburg.

"We found that by working with the outside we're able to move faster to develop products for the marketplace," said Rod Bailey, manager of external research at Greenville-based Michelin Americas Research Corp., one of three research centers operated by the French tire maker.

In other presentations:

* Ed Robinson, director of the Applied Research and Development Institute, a unit of the *South Carolina Research Authority*, said his organization plans to investigate the use of titanium in U.S. Army vehicle armor. That dovetails with the business plan of American Titanium Works, A Chicago-based startup company planning a 320-worker plant in Laurens County and a 30-worker research center in Greenville.

* Kathy Harris, a partner with Noro-Moseley Partners, an Atlanta venture capital firm, said her company has not yet invested in *South Carolina*, but has looked at 120 business plans of companies with ties to the state and is conducting due diligence with a Columbia company. Noro-Moseley received \$10 million to invest in high-impact ventures as part of a state program to boost entrepreneurship.

* Entrepreneurs Michael Bolick and Ralph Hulseman gave updates on their advanced materials startup companies. Hulseman, a former Michelin researcher, is launching a company called Hoowaki with Warner as an investor. Bolick, who founded Selah Technologies around nanotechnology invented at Clemson, reviewed his company's efforts to enter the cancer detection market.

Also speaking were Tom Vogt, director of the USC Nanocenter at the University of *South Carolina*; Barry Burks, associate director of the Charlotte Research Institute at the University of North Carolina Charlotte; and

Jack Roach of the Southeast Institute of Manufacturing and Technology in Florence.

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