

Nanotechnology opportunities exist despite recession



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The recession has dealt a severe blow to investments in nanotechnology, but opportunities still exist for companies creating the right products.

Those were the take-aways from a nanotechnology symposium today that drew 100 people to Lehigh University.

Nanotechnology, the science of creating materials and devices at the atomic levels, has proven itself in a variety of industries by making products stronger, lighter and more efficient, panelists said.

Nanotechnology is named after the nanometer, a unit of measure equal to one billionth of a meter. Most nanotech products measure between one and 100 nanometers, while atoms are usually two or three nanometers wide.

David Hwang, an emerging technology analyst with Lux Research, said nanotechnology is being used to make vehicles lighter and more fuel-efficient, which highlights the role it will play in fighting global warming.

"The threat of global warming is forcing industry to change more quickly than ever before," Hwang said, adding that presents opportunities for nanotechnology companies that can make products more efficient.

Charles Brumlik, a principal with the consulting firm Nanobiz, said nanotechnology has large growth potential in the field of clean technologies. Products are needed to help manufacturers reduce the energy they use and materials they consume, he said.

The nanotechnology market is expected to grow to \$1.3 trillion by 2017 and \$3.2 trillion by 2020, with much of the investment in improving manufacturing efficiencies, Brumlik said.

"We believe that the limited availability of certain resources is a much bigger issue than carbon dioxide," Brumlik said.