Startup company Vista Engineering is seeking up to $800,000 in investments for a bigger reactor to produce the smoothest diamond coating on drills and other tools.

Prinal Trivedi and other University of Alabama at Birmingham researchers want to partner with a company to finish developing software she says will speed up analyses of biomedical data.

Presentations about Vista and the software developers were among 14 given Wednesday at UAB Technology Day, a forum to highlight university technology available for licensing and showcase companies that hold such licenses and are developing products for public use.

Midway between the lineup of 20-minute talks, attendees visited a three-dimensional laboratory to see how mechanical engineers use the technology to check air pressure around a car, study auto crashes and simulate fuel burning in a space shuttle injector. Also viewed were 3-D designs of a mouth for the dental school to use in teaching, a pelvis for a study on how the body part is crushed and a beating heart.

Lucy Hicks, research foundation director, said Technology Day was planned to address requests of the community, the state and the region to have access to see what work UAB investigators are generating, particularly in biotechnology.

The message of the day was partnerships are key to realizing the potential for marketing laboratory discoveries by scientists, engineers and medical doctors.

UAB researchers are creating "technologies that are marketable that can help people, that can help cure diseases, that can make a difference in our community and in our world," said Alane P. Barnes, licensing associate with the intellectual property management office for the UAB Research Foundation and the Southern Research Institute.

Since the university cannot commercialize the products, it has to appeal to businesses, Barnes said.

That's why one goal of the forum was to help UAB investigators think in terms of marketing, bundling technology and creating value, Barnes said.
Leading the trumpeting on partnerships was Dr. Eli Capiluto, UAB acting provost. "The universe of stakeholders that are going to make this successful, that are going to create improvements in the quality and quantity of life cannot be restricted to just scientists and engineers but must include many more," he said. Capiluto said investors, entrepreneurs, lawyers, accountants, ethicists, clergy, informed citizens and elected officials should be included.

The first beneficiaries of the ventures will not only be Birmingham or Alabama residents but "citizens of the world because matching discoveries with entrepreneurs and capital, we think, can move some of our intellectual yields from basic research to improve and extend life," he said.

"If we're going to take full advantage of and maximize the opportunities that occur as a result of all of the research dollars that flow into this university, it takes a partnership and a team effort," said Susan Matlock, executive director of the Office for the Advancement of Developing Industries. "And that team effort is both external to the university and internal to the university."

The external partnerships - with venture capitalists, law firms like Baker Donelson, TechBirmingham, Venture Club and others - are obvious, Matlock said. Those groups, along with the Biotechnology Association of Alabama and Alabama Information Technology Association, are important to increasing awareness of what UAB has discovered, Matlock said.

Internal support includes Southern Research; the research foundation; the medical, engineering and business schools; and OADI Technology Center. OADI was created to serve businesses created from UAB technology transfers, Matlock said. Its services include providing business development training, help in preparing funding proposals and links to venture capitalists.