David Akopian, professor of electrical and computer engineering at UTSA, was named a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors (NAI) in December 2016. He is the second NAI Fellow for UTSA. The honor places Akopian among an elite group of professionals that includes presidents and senior leaders of research universities, Nobel laureates, National Inventors Hall of Fame inductees and National Academies members.
With 32 patents to his name, Akopian’s productivity as an inventor and researcher is exemplary. What is not so easily measured—and perhaps far more impactful—is Akopian’s legacy as a mentor to the hundreds of students who have had the great fortune of working and studying under him. Due to his industry background, he infuses a real-world, multidisciplinary perspective into his laboratory and classroom.

Akopian’s research interests are in a broad area of communication and navigation systems. He focuses on human-machine interactive mobile applications, wireless sensing, location-finding and software-defined radio technologies. His most recent research projects have focused on mobile interactive solutions for health promotion interventions.

Akopian is the founder and director of the Software Communications and Navigation Systems Laboratory at UTSA. Since 2004, his lab has trained more than 90 students who have gone on to successful careers at a variety of companies, including Apple, Google, Samsung, Cisco Systems, Amazon, Intel and Verizon.

In the course of his academic career, Akopian has acquired 25 issued and seven pending patents exploring various aspects of wireless localization systems, indoor wireless technologies and human-machine wireless concepts. Several of his patents have been used in Nokia products and UTSA testbed systems serving several federal and state projects. He has received four inventor awards from UTSA and Nokia.

His research has been supported by the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health (NIH), USAF, NAVSEA, ONR, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, CPRIT-TX, among others. Current funding comes from NIH, CPRIT-TX, San Antonio Life Sciences Institute (SALSI) and the US Air Force Academy (USAFA).

A prolific author, Akopian’s research has resulted in more than 200 publications, including three book chapters, eight edited proceedings, 44 journal papers and more than 150 invited and refereed conference papers and presentations. He served as associate editor for five periodicals, and he has chaired more than 10 mobile technology conferences.

Since 2003, Akopian has served as a senior member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, where he also served as chair and vice-chair of the Central Texas Chapter of IEEE SMC Society for eight consecutive years. He is a member of the US Institute of Navigation (ION). In 2008 his team won the forth place (Honorable Mention) in national AT&T’s “Big Mobile on Campus Challenge.” In 2015, he co-supervised the students from the UTSA College of Engineering who successfully showcased their engineering skills and solutions in the Perseus III unmanned technology demonstration held at the United States Air Force Academy.
The NAI Fellows Program was established to highlight academic inventors who have demonstrated a prolific spirit of innovation in creating or facilitating outstanding inventions that have made a tangible impact on quality of life, economic development and the welfare of society. Election to NAI Fellow status is the highest professional distinction accorded solely to academic inventors.

The program has 912 Fellows worldwide representing more than 250 prestigious universities and governmental and non-profit research institutes. Collectively, the Fellows hold more than 32,000 issued U.S. patents, which have generated over 9,400 licensed technologies and companies, and created more than 1.3 million jobs. In addition, over $137 billion in revenue has been generated based on NAI Fellow discoveries.

With the induction of the latest class, there are now more than 100 presidents and senior leaders of research universities and non-profit research institutes, 439 members of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; 36 inductees of the National Inventors Hall of Fame, 52 recipients of the U.S. National Medal of Technology and Innovation and U.S. National Medal of Science, 29 Nobel Laureates, 3 Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering recipients, 261 AAAS Fellows, 168 IEEE Fellows, and 142 Fellows of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, among other awards and distinctions.