

# From Labs to Lives

## How Research Funding Solves Real-World Problems

### Designing Intelligent Machines That Work with Humans

Zhaodan Kong is an associate professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Aerospace Engineering at UC Davis. His federally funded research examines autonomous systems and intelligent machines, exploring how technology can better collaborate with humans rather than simply becoming more automated. His research investigates how machines, robots and AI can be designed to support human judgment and fit into the way people work and make decisions.

### Helping Humanity

Kong's research helps create technologies that enhance human capabilities, such as drones that can help firefighters detect wildfires earlier, as well as robots and AI systems that assist astronauts during space missions with organizations like NASA. Funding from agencies like NSF helps test and refine technologies before they are used in real-world situations. Losing that support means fewer innovations would move from research labs into everyday use.

**// Federal funding make it possible to do careful and long-term work and make sure that new technology actually works before people depend on them.” — Zhaodan Kong**



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