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Dr. Benavides is a Technical Warrant Holder in the U.S. Coast Guard's Airworthiness Branch. He has been with the Coast Guard since 2001 and supports airworthiness and engineering efforts of all Coast Guard aviation assets. Sam is also an adjunct professor at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University where he developed and teaches core airworthiness courses for their Master of Science degree in Airworthiness Engineering.

Sam earned a Bachelor's Degree in Metallurgical Engineering and a Master's Degree in Materials Engineering from the University of Texas at El Paso. His Doctoral Degree is from The George Washington University. Having coached many Odyssey of the Mind teams over the last few decades, Sam is now the structures problem captain for the Coastal North Carolina Odyssey region. He claims that engineering is easier.