Participant 6 – Ruby Clend

GIBCT – Not very much, just relocated from NC to VA. Was looking for a new school but was doing it manually. Didn’t know there was something online to do that.

Usability Testing – Not with the GI Bill. One previous one for translating a website for women veterans – an option on the website to change it to a different language

Importance of benefits:

Marine Corp

A lot because I saw my sister go through and the family paid all of it. I was more independent – I wanted to do it my way. When I was signing up for the military…my father was former military…it was a big deal…it was taking 4 years away from school…and this benefit was kind of a guarantee I would still get that

Getting Associates with 6-8 months left of benefits. I don’t need it for work specifically. I wanted to do health care management or one that’s at Cornell…women’s leadership, those are 100% online, but to take advantage of VAH then I want to do it in person

Factors:

Reputation – several friends went to University of Phoenix to check the box, others did all online, you don’t want something that would lose its accreditation, 2 - That they offer a combination of online and in-person or in-person experience. I don’t necessarily want to sit in a class of 18 year olds, but I do like to sit in a class. 3 - I’d say the course of study – if they offer a degree program that interests me. I’m almost certain I’m going to pick Shepherds University because of where they are located. They have 2 programs I’m interested in – and one of them is in the evening and I was hoping to do class in the day. 4 - So the flexibility of doing classes when I want to

Alerts from VA:

I was reaching out to other veterans that go to that school. What veteran programs they have…not a vet center, but a vet resource center. They have a coffee shop. They have a social aspect to it where they are very veteran friendly. I want to see if they had any trouble…a teacher can be very headstrong about their opinion or not including of veterans who have served. I’ve heard from veterans and about teachers who are veterans – I’m asking people about their experience.

How track people down? – mostly using community. Find out in passing that they are going to school and ask how things are going. I was actually pleasantly surprised with one school. It was a school I wasn’t interested in, but I talked to someone who went there and it sounded great. Like a trade school. Too bad it wasn’t something I was interested in. Sometimes a school will do a veterans or resource affair. While at those events, you can ask people what they think and if they would do it again

Characterization;

Value, benefit of it, reputation of academic institution, credibility of it, not me opening up my wallet and giving that money, you still want to make sure it’s a good use…good value…is it somewhere where I’m not going to say I’m embarrassed to say I went there. How much is it going to help me in real life

Task 1: 2

[Opened military status…scrolled down then up…

Typed in San Digo…backspace to San Diego and clicked option]

Oh…that’s neat…I typed it in and it was an autocomplete feature…that was nice. And having the different campuses come up…I knew they had one, bud didn’t know about the other. This is neat, it shows how much the GI Bill pays…almost a one stop shop. I like that it shows what types of veteran programs it has. Trying to research that on your own can be a pain. It has a contact certifying officials….secondary. for veteran services. The only thing that would help with that would be a contact link to go to the veterans information page for that institution. It looks like it has all the information for the questions you would have. That’s neat. I hadn’t seen this before. Someone put in a lot of research to do this. I like it.

Task 2: 2

It would be nice to see the Search Schools button above the fold….so you don’t have to scroll. I wouldn’t have known I needed to scroll down. We’re not all tech savvy. Some of it just have high school degrees.

[Scrolling through the page…] looks like they have several campus…a couple flags come up. You can filter the results and narrow it down if you’re looking to

[Clicked Pensacola…scrolling down] I’m looking at the school information. It has a lot of similar information such as how much the GI Bill will cover, how much they charge, the books, etc. It looks like this one breaks it down even farther to benefits by term. And it has the veteran programs categorized together. And it has an accreditation issue…and it has it there so you don’t have to go through the process of finding that out. I like that it has this little complaint thing…I think it would be very Amazon user experience..like if you were a student and wanted to give feedback instead of just complaints. If there are a hundred reviews by current students with one complaint is different from 5 students with 4 complaints…and looking if a lot of people have the same complaint. Like Amazon with helpful reviews…I like how they have it broken down and categorized. The school may not like it, but as a consumer its helpful. I think the other one had something about who their veteran service rep was….that was helpful because you were able to put a name or point of contact to it. And sometimes if its just a name of someone who did it previously….sometimes I call and they’re like “Veteran contact…like alumni?” And I’m like [sigh]….I’d love to see a video or commercial of how its going to be put out there once it flies. It would have been nice to have seen a video that this existed. I’m familiar with the Welcome to VA handbook and that didn’t have this. It’s on their website and you could ask them to mail you one or just open it up on PDF. They promoted it and you could go to the section you were interested in. Filing a claim. I used that to see if I had an GI Bill left…I don’t remember if it told me right on the screen or if they sent me a letter. I do remember that they sent me a letter later.

Cautionary warnings - I saw it flagged on the previous page and saw it here. I like that it’s on there and not a little asterisk. And it says right off the bat that there’s a warning…and you can click on it? Yeah…and it goes right to it. Which is good because the last thing you want to do is waste your benefits. Almost it should be in red instead of yellow…because then you can’t miss it. I like that it has the complaint type and categorized them together…if it was refund issues and one complaint in that category…its something that could be forgivable. You’re sharing that information with the veteran versus saying “Yeah they have some bad stuff”. Just being able to see the complaint types is helpful.

If I see accreditation issue, would I even be allowed to use my GI Bill there? And anticipating the question, I don’t know if it has that issued, is it red flagged. Do we not recommend that veterans attend this campus? Maybe a star process – this many stars for this….is there going to be additional paperwork or checks and balances because of this issue?

My first thought…I’d call them or text them and then them that this school has a bad reputation or has issues. On this page, they had it where you could print it? If they had a hyperlink where you could email it. Like if I wanted to email it to myself so I could have that info. “Print this page” where it would be a 1-2 pager that I could give to someone. I’m going to sign up but I need to know more about this warning…if you have it in your hand, it’s from the VA website and they’ll be like “oh let me see that”. Your friend may not even know about this website. If it was a really good reputable school, I still might want to share it with a friend.

Task 3: 2 , 2

I scrolled down and put in name of city and it looks like there are a few options…quite a few options. This is really minor, but because there are so many on one page…if you could make them hyperlinks (titles) so they underline when you hover over them. Right now, it looks like a small grey block…maybe a line below it and above it….when I look at it, it looks like one university with multiple campuses…if there were 14 and you knew there were 3 you were interested in…maybe a checkbox or comparison tool? But I could click on it to narrow it down to just 2.

My first sorting is by housing or tuition. I’m looking to see if there’s a way to sort by that…I don’t see that though. It looks like some things can be sorted like institutions with warnings, which is a plus…maybe one by tuition, housing, books. That would be nice as a sorting option. How much housing money you receive. Since its Phoenix and all in the same city, I guess they would have the same housing…I guess I just answered my own question so you wouldn’t need to sort by housing…but just to know what housing is in that area.

The ones that didn’t have the warnings I would consider. If they had a high number of veterans attending that would matter. When I clicked on it (profile page), it said how many GI bill students were there…the top section, certificate programs, for profit schools. It would be nice to have number of GI bill students on search results. When I see an institution who has very few GI students…or none, like this one,…I would expect to have to explain a lot of things to them and there would be teaching and handholding. You’re going to go to a school that has a lot and they will fill out your paperwork. I want to go to that school, they don’t have GI bill students…that would be a risk that payments could be late. Inherited risk?

I would look at both of them, but it wouldn’t be my top options (school with no GI versus school with GI and warnings). They are comparable in my eyes. They have 0 students…Campus closing soon that is a very big deal. I’m glad that information is on there. Title IV participation…I don’t really know what that is. But if someone put the time to put it there…I might Google it to figure out what it is. It might not make sense to someone who is looking. Does this mean they don’t have wheelchair ramps or they’re taking veteran money?

People like to offer their opinions and they don’t always do it in good ways. Everyone is posting your two cents, but unless you go out and vote its not going to change anything. Getting involved in a program and giving feedback…in my case, going back to school. This is great.