School Ratings

Research Readout

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Background & Goals

Background

When Veterans are looking for schools within the Comparison tool, they want to know about the experiences of other Veterans to form a better understanding of what their personal experience at the school would be like.

This is the third round of research on school ratings.

Research goals

- Confirm ratings functionality works well for Comparison Tool users
- Evaluate design changes
- Test design on mobile devices

Hypotheses to be tested

- We believe the ratings design will continue to test well and the design changes will provide an improved experience for the user

Methodology

Method: Remote Usability Testing

Reasoning: The research team conducted remote usability testing using a staging environment to observe how users react and interact with school ratings. We need to be able to ask about their impressions and expectations of ratings to ensure the design is meeting their needs and that changes to the original design are resulting in an improved experience.

Who we spoke with
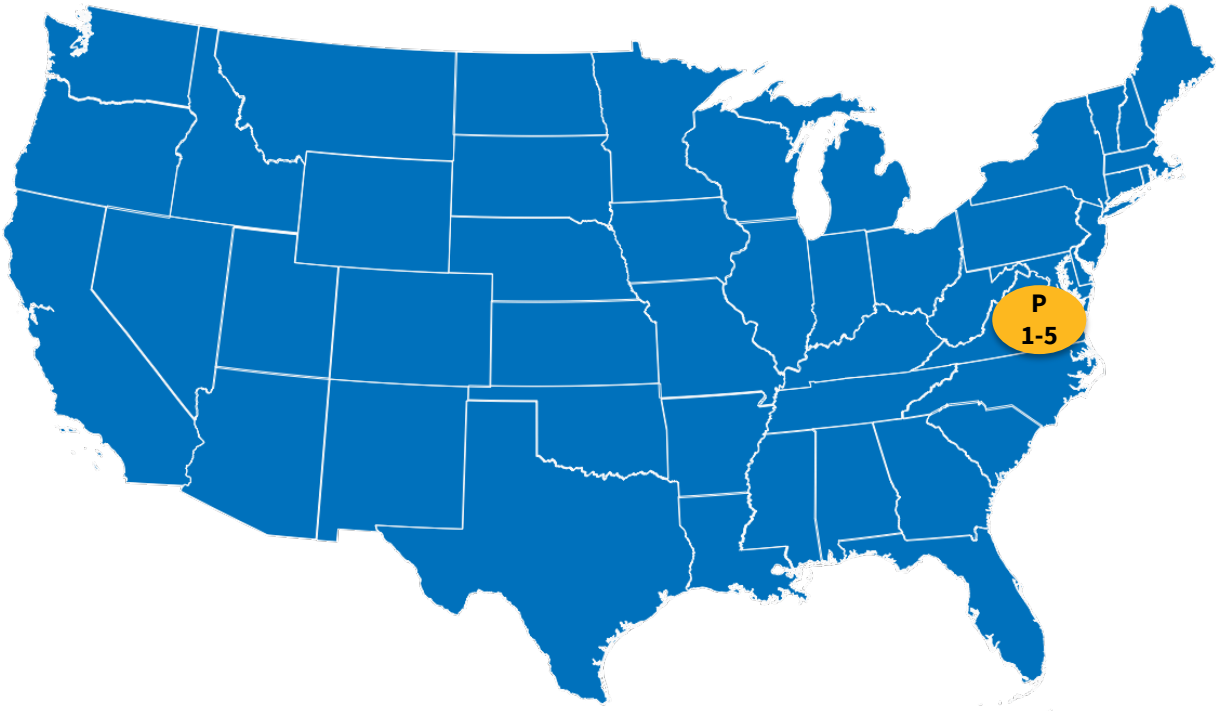
2 Women
3 Men

5
Veterans

2
Branch

2
Ethnic
Backgrounds

25-44
Age Range

Research questions

- What do users think of the ratings?
- Do users think the ratings are useful?
- Are there any aspects of the ratings design that users find confusing?
- How would ratings impact decision-making on school selection?
- What do users believe "True to expectations" means?

Research Findings

Key Findings

Confirmation on Prior Findings

1. Participants believed **general school ratings were helpful**
2. Participants believed **rating categories were helpful**
3. Most participants were **interested in seeing reviews**
4. Most participants said they **would trust the ratings**
5. Participants said ratings **would have an impact on their school decision**

New Findings

1. Participants believed the **"True to Expectations" category aligned with the description**
2. When a school has more ratings than GI Bill students, **some confusion may occur**
3. If viewing schools side by side, participants **want to see ratings included in the comparison**

Confirmation of Prior Findings (1 of 2)

- Participants believed general school ratings were helpful

    "Seeing ratings at the top – it's pretty clutch!" - P3

- Participants believed rating categories were helpful

    - The "most important" categories varied by participant

    "I don't see any of these as a waste of screen space, they all could serve anybody." – P1

- Most participants were interested in seeing reviews

    - 4/5 participants asked about or mentioned wanting written narratives

    - Participants wanted to know what raters did and didn't like about the school

    "I'm always interested in what the bad [rating] thinks. Would be nice if there were comments." – P4

Confirmation of Prior Findings (2 of 2)

- Most participants said they would trust the ratings

  "I would say 99.9% [trustworthy] because Veterans don't care if they hurt people's feelings."
  – P3

- Participants said ratings would have an impact on their school decision

  "I think this could be really beneficial for people figuring out where they want to go." – P1

1. Participants believed the "True to expectations" category aligned with the description

- Participants stated this category reflected if "what is advertised is what you get"

  "True to expectations is: I went to the website, I found the program and am filling out the application, and everything that is being depicted is actually happening." – P5

  "I think that's if you show up there as a student and someone is asking you 'Hey - is Dartmouth the college you expected it to be?'*" – P1*

2. When a school has more ratings than GI Bill students, some confusion may occur

- Participants may have different interpretations on what number of GI Bill students means (e.g. current, cumulative)

  "Why is it rated by 102 Veterans but only 85 GI Bill students attend? Doesn't make sense to me" – P2

3. If viewing schools side by side, participants want to see ratings included in the comparison

- While less important than benefits, ratings was an important factor

  "Benefits are the #1 consideration. Money 1st, ratings 2nd." – P1

  "[In picking between schools] I'd say…60% on cost and 40% on the rating." – P3

  "It looks like the tuition is about the same. Then I'd compare ratings." – P4

Additional Insights

- Participants suggested including information about housing in the area and walkability to school profiles.

- Participants expressed interested in being able to read more detail about Student Complaints.

- Several participants mentioned the importance of knowing a school's accreditation. One participant suggested adding a Caution Flag if the school wasn't accredited.

- Some participants initially thought tuition listed on school cards was the actual tuition and not the amount that was covered.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-SAN FRANCISCO

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

You may be eligible for up to:

Tuition:	100% in-state	**GI Bill students:** 51
Housing:	$4,614 / month	**School rating:** Not yet rated
Books:	$1,000 / year	

View details ›

Recommendations

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- Validate in future testing which categories individuals would use to indicate if a school was predatory

- In Comparison Tool Redesign:

  - Rework the presentation of the number of GI Bill students to clarify what the number means

  - Investigate ways to incorporate ratings into a side-by-side comparison view

Next Steps

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1. Incorporate relevant findings into Comparison Tool Redesign

2. Continue validation of "True to expectations" label, as bandwidth allows

3. Support ratings collection discovery activities, as needed