Comparison Tool Redesign Compare Functionality

Research Readout

Booz Allen UX Team

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Background & Goals

Background

Booz Allen has been working on a re-design of the GI Bill Comparison Tool. One of the major updates for the re-design was to add functionality to enable users to compare schools. Initial designs for the comparison functionality were created and tested previously.

Since users had a few difficulties with comparison in the first round of testing, the team updated parts of the compare process (e.g., behavior and appearance of the compare drawer) and conducted usability testing to assess the updates.

Research goals

Determine the effectiveness of the updated elements of the comparison process on desktop devices.

Elements to be assessed included:

- Ability to compare using the newly redesigned search (particularly location search)

- New appearance and behavior of the comparison drawer

- New design of comparison page

    - Updates to information, appearance, layout and functionality

Hypotheses to be tested

Researchers believe that users will be able to easily find, select and compare schools that they are interested in.

We believe that the fields being compared are important to users and will be useful in determining the benefits and attributes of schools they might like to attend.

Methodology

Method: Remote Usability Testing

Reasoning: Remote moderated usability testing allowed researchers to assess how users interact with the tool and how well they were able to utilize the functionality.

It also allowed researchers to ask questions about what the user is thinking as they complete the tasks to gain better insight into thought, actions and expectations.

Research questions

Ability to compare

- Are users able to effectively add or remove schools from the comparison?

- Are users able to easily navigate between the search results, the comparison drawer and the comparison page?

Compare drawer

- Do users notice the comparison drawer?

- Is comparison drawer behavior effective when the user conducts multiple searches to select schools?

Compare page

- What data fields are users interested in comparing?

- Do users notice the "Highlight differences" functionality? Do they find it useful?

Research Findings

Key Findings

1. When asked to look for schools they were interested in, **most participants executed a location search**

2. Some participants **expressed frustration that they could only see one search result at a time in the location search**

3. Most participants were **able to successfully execute the comparison process**

4. Some participants had **challenges accessing the Compare checkbox from location search results**

5. Some participants **didn't realize they couldn't add more than 3 schools to the comparison**

6. Participants felt the **fields on the Compare page were valuable to them**

7. Participants were very interested in ratings, but **weren't sure on the value since no ratings were available**

8. Most participants saw and **utilized the "Highlight differences" functionality**

1. When asked to look for schools they were interested in, most participants executed a location search

- 2/8 participants ran a name search

- 6/8 participants ran a location search
  - 3 participants searched by city
  - 3 participants searched by zip code
    - 1 participant's zip code search provided no results [due to missing latitude/longitude], so they then ran a state search successfully
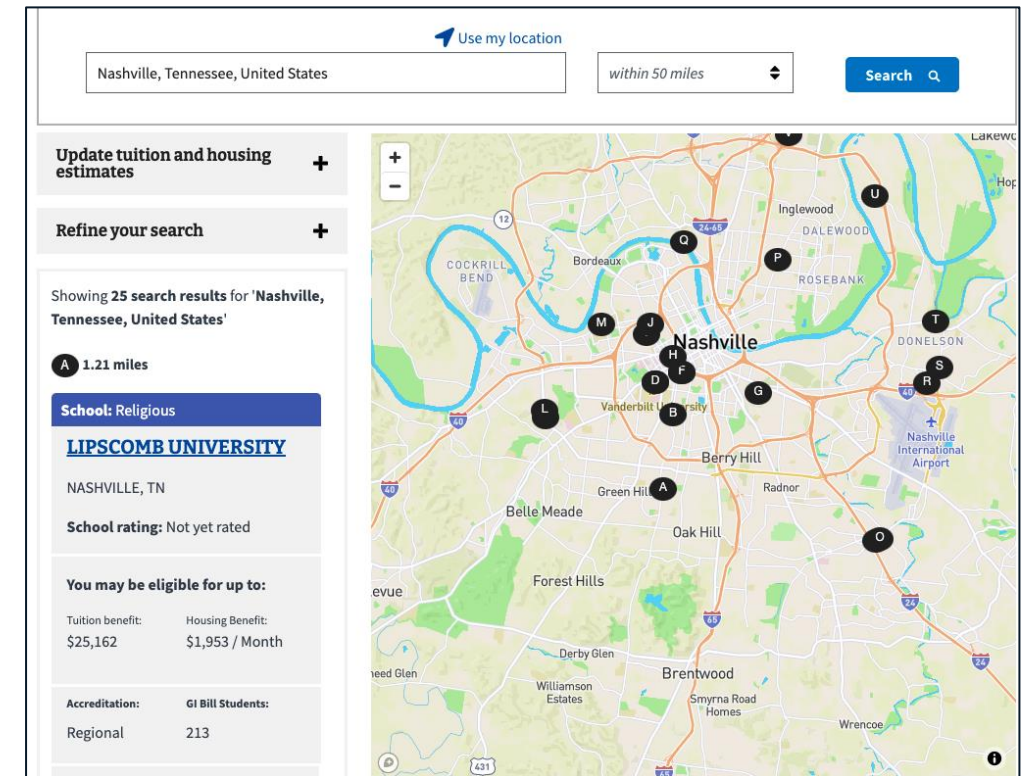
"I'd go 'Search by location', type my zip code and do within 25 miles and hit search" - P7

2. Some participants expressed frustration that they could only see one search result at a time in the location search

- Some participants scrolled through the results list

- Other participants thought you had to click on the pins to pull up schools

"It would be better if it brought up more than one school because that means you have to click on them on the map…this is a pain having to do this. Seriously." - P4
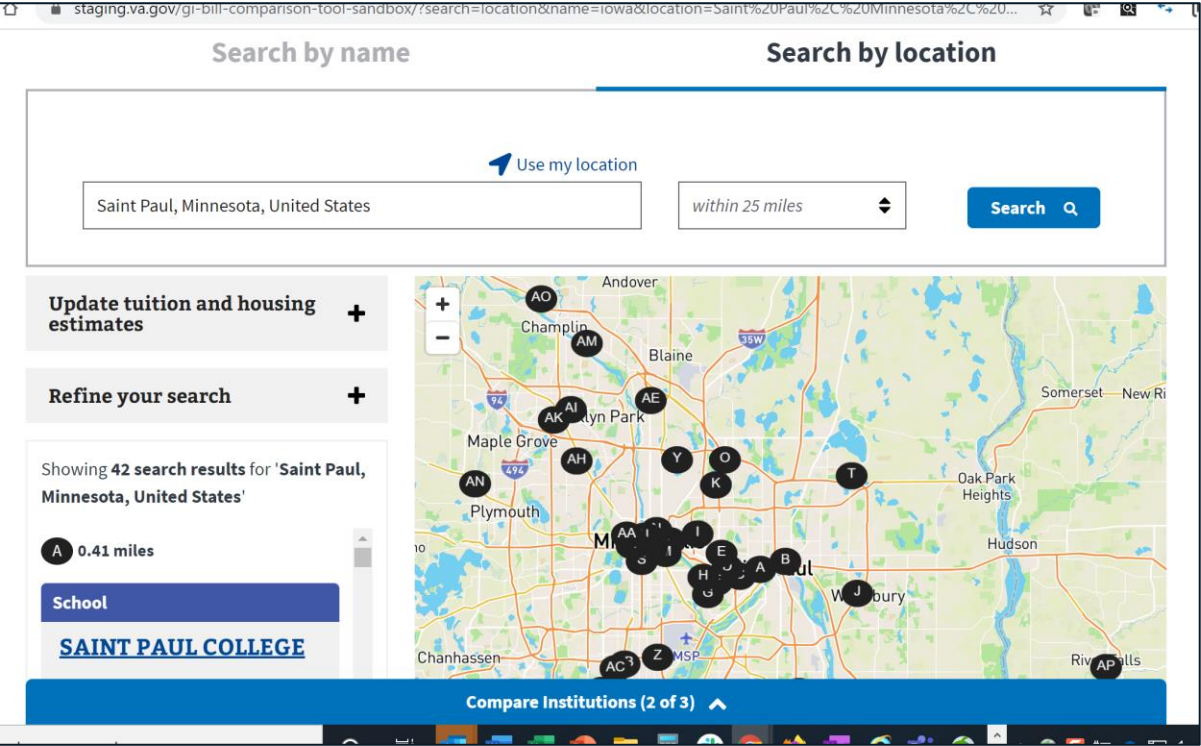

Location search results on Mac (Testing environment)

2 cont'd. Some participants expressed frustration that they could only see one search result at a time in the location search
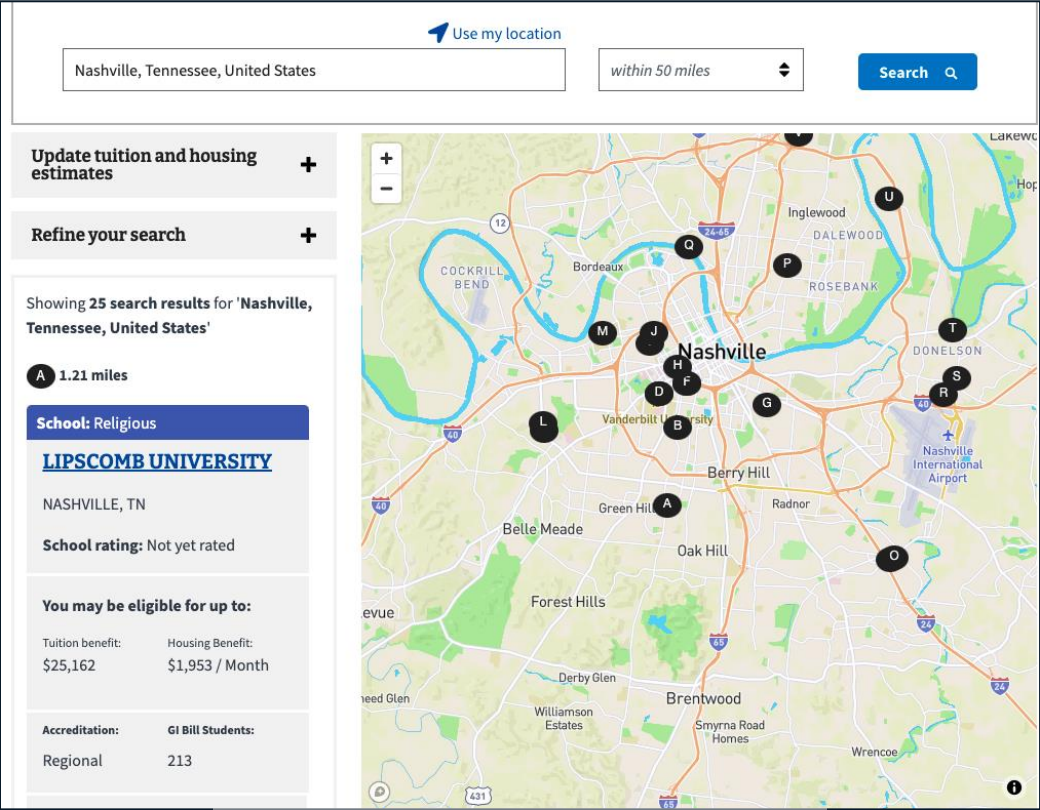
Location search results on Mac
(Testing environment)

Location search results on PC
(Laptop)

3. Most participants were able to successfully execute the comparison process

- 5/8 participants easily executed the entire comparison process on their own

- Of the 3 participants who struggled:
  - 1 participant struggled to add schools to the comparison drawer
  - 1 participant was able to click schools to add them to the comparison drawer but unable to find the drawer
  - 1 participant experienced technical issues due to screensharing which cut off their view of the comparison drawer and made the entire comparison process difficult

*"I'm not sure how to get school names into the boxes to compare them" - P8*

"Let's just say I want to compare the extension and that one….Now where do I go next? There is no call to action anywhere" - P3

4. Some participants had challenges accessing the Compare checkbox from location search results

- Within location search, the Compare checkbox may appear outside the viewport on users' screens

"I'm not sure how to get school names into the boxes to compare them" P4
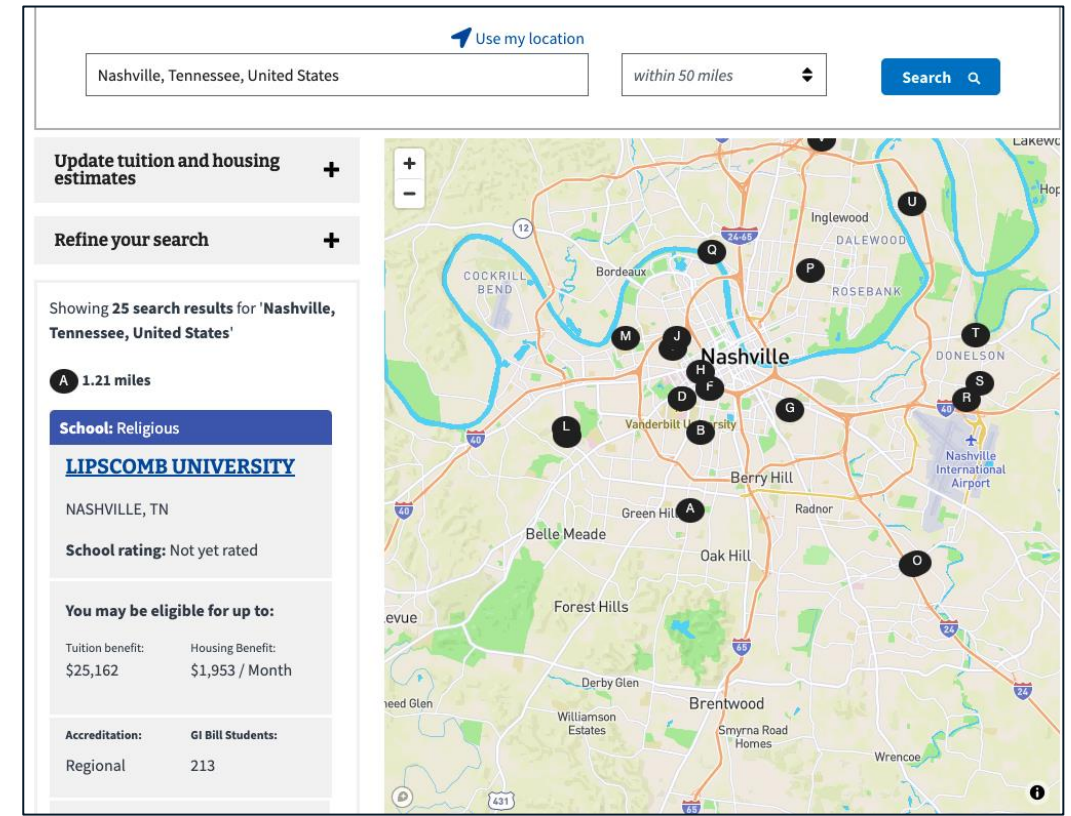
5. Some participants didn't realize they couldn't add more than 3 schools to the comparison

- When the Compare drawer was full, the Compare checkbox still looked available but did nothing when the participant clicked it
  - 1 participant quickly figured out what the issue was
  - Other participants eventually discovered the issue

"Okay, so I think it's not letting us click [the compare checkbox] because we can only compare 3." - P6

6. Participants felt data fields on Compare page were valuable to them

- Benefits, caution flags, Veteran programs, and credit for military training were specifically called out about being important

- Participants had questions on many of the fields
  - Specialized mission, School size, Type of accreditation, 8 Keys to Veteran Success, Priority enrollment

"'Credit for military training' was super important - that boosted me from a sophomore to a junior." - P5

"If I want a chart like this to be helpful, I need to know what some of these things actually mean." - P8

7. Participants were very interested in ratings, but weren't sure on the value since no ratings were available

- Most participants expressed interest on ratings on search results page

- Several participants stopped exploring the Compare page at the School ratings section - possibly due to seeing large numbers of N/As displayed

"I was looking at school rating first because I want it to be a highly rated one for my Bachelor's. However, seeing that the ratings system doesn't seem to be functioning yet I can't base it off of that." - P2

School comparison: View school information side by side to compare schools	BELMONT UNIVERSITY	LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY
☐ Highlight differences	Remove	Remove
School ratings		
Overall rating	**N/A** not yet rated	**N/A** not yet rated
# of veteran ratings	0	0
Education ratings		
Overall experience Rating	N/A	N/A
Quality of classes Rating	N/A	N/A
Online instruction Rating	N/A	N/A
Job preparation Rating	N/A	N/A

8. Most participants saw and utilized the "Highlight differences" on the Comparison page

- 5/8 participants saw and used functionality without being prompted
  - Several participants thought the functionality was valuable
  - One participant said he would prefer to have similar rows disappear
  - One participant said she didn't think it was helpful, but proceeded to use it again later in the session

[clicked "Highlight differences]

"One of the biggest things I didn't notice with Student Veteran Groups is one [school] said 'No' and two said 'Yes'. I missed that before... I love that button" - P1

GI Bill® Comparison Tool

Home › Education and training › GI Bill® Comparison Tool › Compare schools

GI Bill® Comparison Tool

Use the GI Bill Comparison Tool to see how VA education benefits can pay for your education.

School comparison:
View school information side by side to compare schools

	IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY	UNIVERSITY OF IOWA	UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
	AMES, IA	IOWA CITY, IA	CEDAR FALLS, IA
☑ Highlight differences	Remove	Remove	Remove

Summary

Accreditation	Regional	Regional	Regional
✱ Gi Bill students	824	675	270
Length of program	4 year	4 year	4 year
Type of school	School	School	School
Institution locale	City	City	City
✱ Size of school	Large	Large	Medium
Specialized mission	N/A	N/A	N/A

Additional Insights

- Participants were curious about the source of "School ratings"

- Participants who saw "Employer" in the search results card headings didn't understand what it meant

- Participants were interested in searching by the degrees a school offers and seeing that information on the school's profile

Recommendations

Recommendations: Compare

- Searching

  - Consider modifying the search results cards on location search so the "Compare" checkbox is visible on load

- Comparison Drawer

  - Investigate ways to bring attention to the comparison drawer - particularly when an institution is added

  - Identify ways to notify users when no more schools can be added to their comparison

- Comparison Page

  - Keep implementation of the "Highlight differences" functionality

  - Remove ratings from the Comparison page if none of the selected schools have any

  - Provide additional information (Learn more) on fields on the comparison page

Recommendations: Search

- Explore ways to make the concept of "Employer" on search results cards clearer to users

- Continue technical refinement of zip code search to account for missing latitude & longitude data

Recommendations: Additional Insights

- Change general label for ratings from "School ratings" to "Veteran ratings" so it's clear to users who's providing the ratings

- Remove ratings from the Comparison Tool MVP until there are schools with ratings to display

- Keep "Degrees offered" content & functionality in post-MVP backlog for Search and Profile Page

Next Steps

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1. Refine UIs as noted in recommendations

2. Continue development of UI elements which tested well