**School Ratings Discussion Guide**

*Participant 8 – Leonard Muhr*

**Intro - 5 minutes**

Thanks for joining us today! My name is Amy and I also have some colleagues on the line observing and taking notes. Today we would like to talk about ratings and what types of information help Veterans determine if a particular school is a good fit for them.  
Before we start, a few things I want to mention:

* **This entire session should take about 45 minutes.** I want to be sure not to keep you much longer, so I may occasionally prompt you with the next question or topic.
* **In this session, we want to hear your honest opinions.** We just want to improve these tools to better meet Veteran's needs. I will not be offended by any opinions you express, and I welcome your feedback.
* **If for any reason and at any time you want to stop the session, please let me know.**
* **Are you comfortable if I record my screen and audio as we talk today?** We use the recordings to confirm that we have captured your opinions accurately. The recordings are destroyed after we complete analysis, and none of your comments will be attributed to you directly.
  + If yes: **Once I start recording, I am going to confirm that you are ok with me recording this session once more.**

*Start recording.*

* \*\*I have started recording. I'd like to confirm: Are you comfortable if I record my screen and the audio as we talk today?"

**Warm-up Questions (Optional) - 5 minutes**

Let’s start with a few warm-up questions.

* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits? Yes. I used Voc Rehab. I was in the work temp program.?
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - When did you start school?
  + If no, do you plan on using your benefits in the near future?
    - Which benefit?
    - Where are you in the school selection process?
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? I was going to, but haven’t gotten around to it yet. Voc Rehab to be retrained because I can’t do what I’ve done. Yes – I look at schools veterans can get in to. It depends on which site – I look at so many.
  + If yes, what did you use it for?

**Ratings Experience and Overall Value - 15 min**

I'm curious about how you use ratings when you're looking at a particular product or service. For example, if you're purchasing a new vacuum cleaner or trying a new restaurant, how do you decide if you want to try that product or service?

* Do you typically look at ratings when making your decision? Yes – affects it quite a bit. What other people say about the quality is important factors. Is it worth the money we pay for it? Yes, I look at star ratings. Well I look at the overall…if it has four, that’s very good. High quality. Professional – that’s good. One star. Not going to look at it. Accountability as a company or school. Their way of teaching – if its rated I want to know how good they are.
* When you're looking at ratings, what aspects do you pay close attention to (e.g. number of stars, number of people who rated it)?
* Are there any aspects that aren't important to you? I don’t think so. As long as there is professional. If they’re willing to work with Veterans.
* Why are these aspects important or not important to you?
* What helps you decide if a rating or review is trustworthy? I look them up further. I’m looking like the BBB and stuff like that. What the rating is with them also. Verification of the business…how good is there business. I need to know all those things to make a decision. Make sure they aren’t a fly by night thing. Part of it is cross my fingers…I don’t believe if there’s 100% way to determine if they’re people. That’s why I go to BBB to check them out.
* Do ratings influence your ultimate decision? If so, how much?
* Are there any particular sites that you frequently visit that use ratings? What do you like about these sites?
* Have you ever looked at sites to compare schools? I can’t remember them off the top of my head. I tried to do online mostly because with PTSD I have problems. Classes online.
  + If yes, which ones? What did you like about those sites?

**Categories - 15 minutes**

The VA would like to give prospective students better visibility into the educational experience other Veterans have had at a particular school. Some sites like Amazon allow users to rate a product or service on a variety of factors such as product quality, timeliness of delivery, etc.

* If someone who had previously received VA education benefits provided ratings for schools (particularly ones you were interested in attending), what factors would be most valuable to you? The credibility, the trustworthiness of the school, working with veterans, sometimes us veterans get the short end of the stick. Sometimes there are limitations like PTSD. Tuition – how they work with tuition with a veteran and stuff like that. It would help me quite a bit. To be able to work with a school and making everything work. I can get confused on paperwork and stuff like that. PTSD is not one of the better gifts you can get.
* Is there any other information that you would like to know from Veterans who had attended a school you were interested in?
* How valuable would that information be in making a decision to attend the school or not?

**Pull up categories visual provided by EDU**

* (As applicable) In terms of school ratings, there are a few factors I would like to get your feedback on.
  + What do you think this factor means?
  + Would it would be helpful in your decision making process?

Five Star Ratings:

* Institution Overall – work ethics, learning ethics stuff like that, the overall how they are
* Quality of Classes – how the structure works with the students, is there 1;1 if you need it
* Veteran Friendliness – the institution closely works with veterans with some disability, can they accommodate that
* Employment Preparation – that’s kind of important. They told me that if you go to this program, they’ll hire you. But that’s not the case. It’s just a class.
* Recruiting/Marketing Practices – Business ethics, how they recruit, things like that, falls within BBB and things like that
* Most important: Veteran Friendliness, Institution overall, quality of classes
* Not worried about recruiting/marketing
* No other ones – the most important ones are there
* Are there any other types of ratings that you would like to see? (For example, the percentage of Veterans who would recommend a particular school)
* Who do you think should be able to submit ratings for a school?
  + Someone who applied and was accepted – Yes, their input as far as enrollment, but they haven’t done classes so you can’t get a full view
  + Someone who applied and was rejected – maybe their opinion, do you know why they were rejected so you don’t make the same mistake
  + Someone who attended classes, but didn't complete their degree – if they didn’t complete it, I wouldn’t be very interested. They didn’t follow through. You started something but you didn’t finish it.
  + Someone who finished their degree – that’s someone to really talk to. When they start something, they finish it. Their opinion is quite valid.
  + All people to provide ratings – you want a majority of ratings to get a broader range

**Pull up a school profile page on the CT**

The VA is considering incorporating ratings into the GI Bill Comparison Tool so beneficiaries of education benefits can provide feedback on the schools they have attended. The page in front of you is a school profile page on the GI Bill Comparison Tool.

It would be cool to see it once we get past the information they’re asking for. Once you see the ratings, it helps you determine which direction you should be going.

Typed cwu and clicked search. No results. Looking through filters. \*\*Had to take over – Amy guiding through\*\*

Changed to Voc Rehab. Search Central Washington University

* If ratings were incorporated into the Comparison Tool, where do you think it would make the most sense for the ratings to appear?
  + At the beginning…right there when you first open it. You can scroll down and read, but it’s right there when you first open it. It would be an important piece of information. The two would play hand in hand – the ratings and how much money you are getting. Those are two key elements to know. If you integrate the two, it’ll tell you everything in one shot.
* What are your thoughts on the trustworthiness of ratings that would appear in the Comparison Tool? Why? Again – that’s a shot in the dark. That’s important – especially if they’re coming from our Veterans. There are outside people who have opinions, but us veterans rely on each other. That goes back to our training and what we were in. It would be important to see that these ratings were from Veterans at the school
* Work therapy program – almost like you’re an employee, but you aren’t. Trained to be landscaping. Chose it by talking to a counselor. It’s non-tax income. It’s therapeutic and training work.

**Post-Task Interview - X minutes**

* Any questions for me?

**Thank-You and Closing - X minutes**

Well we really appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with us today. Your feedback is so helpful to us as we continue to work on the site and make sure it really works for Veterans.

Thanks! Lastly, do you know any other Veterans, caregivers, or service members who might be willing to participate in a future user research session? If Yes: Thank you! I'll have our team send you an email with a little blurb that you can pass along.

Great, well thank you so much again, and enjoy the rest of your day!