**SCO Migration: School Resources Discussion Script**

*October 10, 2019*

**Welcome and Opening Remarks (5 minutes)**

*[When the participant is ready, the moderator will begin the session with the following introduction.]*

Thanks for joining us today! My name is [Theresa], and I also have two colleagues on the line, Amy and Cindy. They are observing and taking notes. We are working on refining content within the school resources section of the VA website and are interested in getting your thoughts on some work in progress.

We’re looking for your impressions on what aspects of the website work well and where we might make improvements to make things even easier for school certifying officials & administrators.

Before we start, I’d like to mention a few logistical details:

* We are interested in hearing your honest opinions. Our goal is to be sure this content meets the needs of school officials and administrators. You are welcome to express any opinions you wish. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas and welcome your feedback.
* If for any reason you want to pause or stop the session at any time, just let me know. I'll be happy to do so.
* By testing the site thoroughly, we hope to ensure that it’s written in a thoughtful way and gives school officials quick access to information they need to help their military-connected students.
* Do you have any questions so far?
* Lastly, we generally record sessions, in case we need to confirm that we have captured your opinions accurately.

Are you comfortable if I record the audio as we talk today?

Great! I'm going to turn on screen and audio recording now. Once it's on, I'll ask again, as we like to have your verbal consent

[The meeting host will begin audio and screen recording.]

Have you participated in usability testing before? [Respond… Y: How’d that go? N: No problem. ]

The most important thing for you to know for today is that we’re not testing you, we’re trying to get a handle on how well the pages we’ll look at meet the needs of school administrators.

There aren’t any wrong answers. The more you say about what you see and whether it works for you, the better info we have to work with after we wrap up.

Are you comfortable if we record the audio and screen movements today?

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

Before we look at the website, let’s start with a few warm-up questions.

*DEMOGRAPHICS*

Be sure we have this info…

* How long have they been SCO? Officially since July, but I’ve done a lot of communicating with veterans in the past. I just hadn’t been the official certifier.
* Where is their school located?
* How many GI Bill students are at their school? I think we’re at about 55.
* Possibly: How many people supporting military-connected students at their school? No, just me.

*GENERAL WARM UPS*

1. How often do you visit the School Certifying Officials content on va.gov now? Here and there, but I’ve been doing a lot of the training that’s been coming out, so I’ve been relying on those mostly.   
   T: what kind of training is that?   
   It’s mostly online. I signed up for every webinar that I possibly could. I’ve been saving a lot of PDFs.
2. What type of info are you looking for when you go there? Typically I’m looking for information about student benefits that I’m not finding in the SCO handbook, so things that I could pass on to students that are more relevant for them and less for me. At one point, there was a factsheet for study abroad, and I know what I can certify for student abroad, but students were wondering about what they can and can not do. Our previous SCO had an internal handbook, and I couldn’t find a way to search specifically for education benefits regarding a certain topic.   
   T: are they mainly education based?   
   Yeah, I’ve had a few students that were looking for local resources outside of education benefits, and I basically directed them to the Portland VA office thinking they would have the best information.  
   T: other content you’d like on the site?  
   Sometimes it’s difficult to navigate certain places, so I’ll have a link that I can click on that will take me there, but as far as finding it from the main page can be difficult. So I guess, ease of access has been something that I’ve struggled with.
3. What’s it like for you to get the info you need from that website?

Okay, let's go ahead and walk through a few scenarios.

**Think Aloud**

While you are going through the site, we ask that you please think aloud and vocalize your thoughts and decisions. The more you say about what you are thinking and wondering, the more we’ll learn. We are interested in your first reaction, as well as what you are thinking as you engage with the content. Sharing your thoughts aloud may seem strange at first, but it helps us understand what you are thinking and give us valuable information.

**Prototype**

Today we’ll be working with a prototype, not a real website. We create mock-ups like these to be sure we have everything right before we code the actual website. You may notice only certain links have been activated. If you get to one of those links, no worries. We’ll just mention it’s not active yet and may ask what you thought would happen when you clicked it.

[ Start participants on VA.gov homepage.]

SCENARIOS

1. GETTING TO THE SCHOOL RESOURCES PAGE & FINDING SCO HANDBOOK

* How do they find the school Resources page?
* How do they get to SCO Page?
* Can they quickly find SCO Handbook?
* How do you typically get to that site?

Notes:

FINDING REQUIRED TRAINING

* Should we have them find the page again?
* Can they quickly find required training?

Notes:

1. FINDING INFO ON AN UPCOMING WEBINARS

* What’s their reaction to SCO sub-content?
* How do they return to SCO Page?

Notes:

1. FINDING RESOURCES TO HELP MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS

* What’s their reaction to link directing out of SCO Resources?
* How do they get back to SCO Page?

Notes:

**Scenario #1 (5 minutes)**

FINDING SCO HANDBOOK

Let’s start off with one of the most important tasks. Could you use this prototype to show me how you’d go about getting to the SCO Handbook on the VA website?

As you go about finding it, please talk aloud and let us know what you are thinking.

Observe…

* How do they (want to) get to the page?

*After the participant has found the required training or given up on the task.*

Notes:

I’d probably start by going to Education, but it looks like that’s not available. [He went to the nav menu and found the edu home page there]. Normally, what I would do is give up and google it.

[edu page] Since this page looks like it’s for students, I would probably give up and google it. [he started looking in the footer].

T: let’s go up to the top and start looking down the right hand side.

So, I do see where it says for school administrators here. For me, I wouldn’t have looked at that before. It seems a little hidden compared to everything else. Everything else seems so large and in your face, but this is straightforward. [what if we move the link under intro paragraph?]

[sco page]

This is actually helpful. These key resources right here, all 5 of these links are things that I’ve had to look for before, so it’s nice that they’re right at the top of the page.

**Follow up questions**

* How easy or difficult would you say that was?
* What are your impressions of that process?

Notes:

**Scenario #2 (10 minutes)**

FINDING REQUIRED TRAINING

As part of the Colmery Act, we understand that some SCO will need to take some additional training. Have you determined whether you have to complete additional training this year? [respond to their input: how’d that go? Or is that something you’re planning to do? ]

Let’s say you'd like to complete your training for the year. Could you walk us through how you’d go about finding the training that’s required for SCOs this year?

Please talk aloud and let us know what you are thinking.

Observe…

* How do they get to required training once they’re on the page? (Jump links vs. Scroll)

Notes:

[He scrolled down and found the 2019 sco training link] That was really straightforward and it was actually really helpful because of this part here, just the title being so bold. I could be wrong, but in the old page, it’s not something that stands out well, so this is great.

**Follow up questions**

* How did you think that process went?
* How easy or difficult was it to find the training you needed?

Notes:

**Scenario #3 (5 minutes)**

FINDING INFO ON AN UPCOMING WEBINARS

Have you attended VA Webinars in the past? [respond to their input]

Let’s say your colleague mentioned they were going to attend an upcoming webinar on the Nourse STEM Scholarship later this month. You have a lot of questions about that scholarship. How would you go about finding information on that webinar?

Observe…

* How do they get back to the School Resources page when they’re done with the task?

Notes:

Ok, [he scrolled down to upcoming] so I’d probably ook at this information here, Training Webinars. [T: ok, you can click that, and let’s say there was one listed for December]

T: how do you think that process went for finding something like that?

Way better than usual, very straightforward.

**Follow up questions**

* How did you think that went?
* How would you typically learn about a new VA programs? I’m subscribed to basically every email notification you possibly can, so that’s how I get the majority of them. Usually when I haven’t gotten emails about education benefits in a while, I’ll come to a page like this and see if there’s something I didn’t notice before [breaking news].

Notes:

**Scenario #4 (5 minutes)**

FINDING INFO ON the STEM Program

Have any of the students at your school asked about the new STEM scholarship? [respond to their input]

Let’s say one of your students is nearing the end of his GI Bill entitlement and is interested in applying for the STEM Scholarship. How would you go about finding information on who is eligible to participate in the STEM program?

Observe…

* How do they get back to the School Resources page when they’re done with the task?

Notes:

T:Any students asked about stem scholarship yet?

No, and I actually sent that information to them once about a reminder, but I haven’t gotten any questions or any follow up.

T: how would you find out information about the stem program?

I usually try to find out information that is for the students instead of for me because I feel like the wording is already available. I would probably start on this page [edu page] to see...I might go here [eligibility] where it says other va education benefits. [he tried clicking on Eligibility] I might go there because reading this short sentence, I might think that it would be there. If I didn’t think anything would be there, I would probably go to the school administrators page…[started looking around] I might go to [clicked on FAQ for GI Bill] I would hope to see,..at one point I clicked on a link that said Factsheets. Otherwise, I’d probably end up coming here and end up looking here [checked faq page nav menu]

T: [1:24]  
I would go to the factsheet to find a bullet point or blurb that I could pass on to the student so they can have that information.

T: Any other areas where we might find information about stem on SCO page?

Under the scholarships and financial aid link here [all the way at the bottom. Clicked on link]

T: I think this hasn’t been updated yet. It seems like a reasonable place to go.

**Follow up questions**

* How did you think that went?
* How would you typically learn about a new VA program like the Nourse STEM Scholarship?

Notes:

T: without clicking in the gray boxes under the training and guides what would you expect to see?

When I see something like essentials for scos, I would think it’s something very specific to my role, some things that you’d find in the sco handbook. The va once information, I would think that’s like the once handbook. And then non-traditional schools, that is straightforward information for schools that don’t have standard terms, something like that. Advanced topics, that’s kind of broad, so I wouldn’t know what to expect exactly until I looked through and looked there.

**Scenario #5 (10 minutes)**

FINDING RESOURCES FOR MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS

We’ve frequently heard that SCOs help military-connected students in many ways beyond certifying their enrollment. Does that ring true for you? [respond to their input… ]

Let’s say a student asks what scholarships they may be able to obtain to help with educational expenses. Where would you go to find information that might help them?

*NOTE: this task will take them off the prototype to a page like*[*https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/non\_va\_resources.asp#financial\_aid*](https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/non_va_resources.asp#financial_aid)*When they’ve gotten there OR you’ve confirmed they are where they think they should be:*

That was great info. Now, could you show me how you would locate Employment Assistance information?

Observe…

* What’s their reaction to being directed to content on a different page / in a different template?
* How do they try to get back to the School Resources page?

Notes:

So, one thing I always do with our veteran students is just talk in general about what it means to get a scholarship, and best practices, things like that, but on this page, I would probably go to this page where I was before, and click on scholarships and financial resources.

T: what are your thoughts on being redirected from this page?

The main thing that I’ve noticed when I’ve accessed other va pages is that they seem very overwhelming, very tech heavy. Instead of redirecting you to other places, it seems like all the information is right there. and maybe you don’t see it because it’s so heavy. From an aesthetic standpoint, it almost looks spammy, almost something you wouldn’t want to click on. Based on experiences on other sites, when I apply that to this page, it’s where my mind goes initially.

T: very helpful.

**Follow up questions**

* What are your thoughts on finding information for military-connected students within this school officials-oriented section?
* What were your thoughts about ending up on a “different site” (or whatever term they use if they comment on it) when you clicked on the Scholarships & Financial Aid link?

Notes:

T: what are your overall thoughts on the usefulness of.. [1:32]

[he mentioned right column items don’t catch his attention so much]

Even things like this small line help to break up the space, and you don’t miss the fact that you jumped to a new topic or a new section. It would be far easier and a much better experience to use this webpage as opposed to what we have or have had.

**Post-Task Interview (10 minutes)**

Thank you! That’s it for the tasks. How’d you think that went?

* What are your thoughts on whether you’d be able to find information you need on a site like this?
* What are your thoughts on the order of the sections (Key Resources, Announcements, Training, Upcoming Events, Policies and Procedures, Resources for students)? Which sections would you access most frequently? I think the way that it is actually makes a lot of sense because a lot of times that I’m coming to this page is a resource or access to something, like va once. So I think this part here makes a lot of sense [key resources] and having the handbook here is really helpful [promo] and also having the faq at the top makes a lot of sense. I would say, almost just in order of priority, maybe, the other sections make sense in how they fall because training and guides makes a lot of sense here. A lot of times I just dig back through my emails to find a link because it’s a lot easier to find it there than on the website. I’d probably switch upcoming events and policies and procedures. I would put those at the bottom just because maybe that’s what I’m used to seeing.

T: thoughts on the

* How could this page be more beneficial to SCOs or school administrators?
* How likely or unlikely would you be to refer other school officials to content like this?
* IF they have experience with or recall working with the current School Resources pages, ask how they think the version they just tried out compares to the current one.

Notes:

T: announcemnts?

Oh, I didn’t really notice that, not sure why, but now that I see it…[?]

ASK FOR QUESTIONS FROM TEAM.

* Do you have any other thoughts or comments you'd like to share?

Notes:

What are your thoughts on policies and procedures and what you would expect to find here?

If this were to be the first thing I would see, I would expect to see the SCO handbook or the FAQs, but based on what’s here, I think that all makes sense, especially with yellow ribbon, it’s nice that it is its own section where you could find information about that program. With the principles of excellence, that’s something that I’ve been hearing more and more. It’s good that it’s here, but I wouldn’t necessarily come here to find that, and I can’t tell you why, but the forms and factsheets, that’s really helpful to have here. Like I said before, I feel like they’re on the sidebar and it only pops up in certain pages so it’s nice that you can come here and find that here. One thing I’ve never seen is the student side about signing up for benefits, and sometimes they’ll ask me questions that I don’t know and can’t answer. I think under this section it would be helpful to have screenshots and walkthroughs based on SCO experience.

A: what were you not anticipating would be here?

Just the principles of excellence. This isn’t where I would think to go here for it. I wouldn’t know where to go to find that information, so I’d probably try to search for it on the webpage.

A: You mentioned a lot of times that you’re going in and looking for resources for students so that you can send it to them. Where would you go to get that information?

Typically I’d go to a page like this [edu page] where students would go to find it. Like I said, I don’t really know what their experience is like on their end, but they seem overwhelmed and like they don’t know what to do. So I try to go to pages where they would find that information, and I’d like to be able to direct them to that page and build up their skills. A lot of times, I’m trying to go to a student-specific page rather than an SCO page.

Thank you so much for doing this. This is tangible, clear evidence that people are trying to make a better, dynamic experience. [1:43]

**Thank-You and Closing**

Thank you for spending time with us today and sharing your thoughts. That was such great information. This will help us make an even better site for school officials. We really appreciate your help!