**Insight Questionnaire for Military & Veterans’ Services Specialists**

Thank you for joining us today. My name is [NAME] and we also have [NAME OF OTHERS OBSERVING] observing and taking notes for this session. We are conducting research on behalf of a team at the VA that is enhancing the VA.gov website. We'll be looking at the GI Bill comparison tool and are interested in your feedback on what works well and where enhancements might be made to make it more useful for Veterans.

[If questionnaire is sent via email, replace above with the following] Thank you for your willingness to assist the VA.gov team with the GI Bill Comparison Tool enhancement process. Any insights you can provide on how the GIBCT is used will be helpful!

Role? I’m the assistant director in the veterans certification office. 9 COs report to her. Has been doing this for 9 years.

What questions do you have in mind for veterans as you refer them to the CT? **most of them are trying to pinpoint what the bah looks like**. Most have already made the decision to come here. We have several facility codes. We have locations in Hawaii and overseas. We’re really not on the hook for telling students how much of the bah they’re getting, but they can look at the tool. **Generally students will look to make sure that we’re a yellow ribbon school, military TA, if we’ve military and veteran-friendly.** Oftentimes we’ll display things like the principles of excellence, things like that. **Sometimes they also like to see the number of veterans that we certify in a year the higher the veteran population, the more they assume we do know the ins and outs of what we’re doing.**

**The Veteran Experience with the GIBCT**

1. Based on your experience, what aspects of the GIBCT work well for Veterans?

**It does a really good job of answering that main question of the housing, if they’re getting online only, mixed face to face. It’s really good at giving them the options and narrowing it down. Based on the 9/11, they can see that there are different percentages that they can look at.** We’re leaning into the 20s now, so we’re currently at 18 facility codes. **It does allow the students to determine what their housing allowance is in a different location compared to our main campus.**

**We have found it a little bit challenging, mostly for our newer facility codes, is that they’re not entered into the CT in the same way, so some users are having trouble finding them.** A novice user wouldn’t know what to look under, but we can find them. If you enter university of Maryland university college, it’ll bring up our facility code, but for our newer ones, they can only be found under university of Maryland. That just means having to weed through uofm Baltimore campus, etc, which we’re not affiliated with.

Percentage of eligibility? Making decisions from that? I think at this point, they’re already out, they’re already veterans. I wouldn’t be in a position to tell you if it will influence their service time. Once they’re out, this is the easiest way for them to calculate their percentage rates. The communite is driving student decisions on which institution to go with**. It would be great if we could get all of ours [our facilities] on one page. Any of ours that have the umuc, once you type them in, it does show them all. It either shows them from our oldest facility codes or alphabetically. Because our newer facility codes aren’t being pulled in, we’re getting calls from students saying they can’t find them.**

1. What questions do Veterans have as they use the GIBCT?

I don’t think we can answer that. Most of the time, it’s our frontline staff saying here’s where you can find that information.

1. What modifications would make the GIBCT more useful to Veterans?

**Our facility codes, I would like to see them all in one place. I thought they weren’t listed**, but actually \_\_\_\_ found them. I think it looks really great. I think it’s easy to use for most people. I think it is very hepful in helping students determine where they’re going to get the most out of their education benefits.

1. What additional features would enhance the value of the GIBCT?

We have 4 8-week sessions within a term, it’s just, it’s a very different way of calculating their full-time status. We have to tell students what is their full-time status because ours is not the same as a traditional school.

**I think it would be great, and I know that, in the past, there has been a rate of pursuit calculator, where you put in the term date, and you put in the credit hours and it spits back out what your rate of pursuit is.** That has been great in the past. I know it’s still floating out there, that the va came up with, a spreadsheet that was a rate of pursuit calculator.

If there was a rate of pursuit calculator, we do tell our students that, but to have that clarified would be better because sometimes students read that, oh, you need to have 12 credit hours to be full-time, but that’s not what we expect our students to take in 8 weeks.

1. Do you have any other recommendations on how the GIBCT can most effectively offer Veterans the information needed to make an informed decision?

**Your Experience with the GIBCT**

1. What are some reasons why you use the GIBCT?

We look at it quite a bit every time during training because we do want to train all our staff, every time we need to update our housing allowance information, this is where we get the information from. We are pulling information from the GIBCT. For the most part, it does seem very accurate. I do have a question, **when is the number of veterans certified updated? Some of our facility codes show that zero veterans were certified. How often is the institutional information updated?**

**Amongst COs, there’s always been a disappointment when it comes to the student outcomes. They always look pretty bleak. Some of the student outcomes…our students are not going to start with us as their very first school and finish with us.**

What would be better to show? **It would be great to show that we do have a significant portion of veterans that graduate every year. The way it reads to me, it just looks like we’re either not reporting this data or that this data is not available. That’s not true since we do spend quite a bit of time reporting this data and it’s just not getting through. I understand why it’s the way it is, but several veterans organizations have mentioned that it could be done better.**

How would you break that down? Those that I mentioned, the 7 to 900, those..[?] We focus on students only using va benefits.

**This is such a great tool. It’s been really lifechanging for us, and referring students back to it. It is something that could make us liable, and we don’t always want to give out the wrong information. This really allows us to look up the right information without having to look over our shoulder.**

Some of the military service coordinators, they may walk service members through it, but I can’t tell you much about that.

You mentioned overseas students? On the school profile, there’s a question that asks, will the majority of your…? If they were out of the US, how would that work? They can use that. We do have all of the zip codes of our teaching locations listed in our catalog. They can look at our catalog to see what the zip code would be. **Students would have to enter the zip code 99999 in order to get what the overseas housing allowance would be. Both of our overseas locations were tied to the Adelphi code, so they were getting paid the Adelphi rate, but now that it’s updated, they’ll be getting the lower overseas rate.**

You mentioned 18-20 facility codes? Branch campus, main campus, extensions? Do you think about them as branches and extensions? No, we really do not. **It is very state-specific as to how the state-approving agency classifies the facility. Some have been classified as branches, some as extensions. It is arbitrarily done by the state-approving agency.** It is a per-state. With MD, we are good because it’s where our main campus is. For us, on the back end, with the processing, it makes absolutely no difference.

1. Do you feel that Veterans are aware that this tool is available?
2. When you use the GI Bill Comparison Tool, what information are you seeking and what questions are you trying to answer?
3. What modifications to the GIBCT would make your job easier?

Many thanks for your feedback and insights!

* The VA.gov team