**GIBCT Colmery Act Veteran Discussion Script**

*April 11, 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 [name], and I also have two colleagues on the line, Amy and Cindy. They are observing and taking notes. We work with a team at the VA that is enhancing a website called VA.gov and we're interested in speaking with you today about the Education section of the website.

We’d like your thoughts on what aspects of the pages work well and where we might make improvements to make things even easier for Veterans.

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

* We are interested in hearing your honest opinions. We are in no way testing your knowledge or ability. Our goal is to be sure that application meets Veterans’ needs, so we are interested in hearing your thoughts and ideas. You are welcome to express any opinions you wish. We welcome your feedback.
* If for any reason you want to pause or stop the session at any time, just let me know. I'd be happy to do so.
* By testing the site thoroughly, we hope to ensure that it’s written in a thoughtful way and gives Veterans all of the information they need to make informed decisions.
* 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.]

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.

We understand you may be interested in using VA Education benefits.

1. What factors are most important to you as you look as schools?
2. Do you happen to know which Education benefits are you eligible for?

Yes, I am very interested in doing so [ using education benefits]. I’m looking for some of the vocational studies. I Just had a visit this week with a counselor and I found out there are different certifications I can pursue for IT.

1. Would you expect the VA website to offer any resources to help you decide which school to attend? If so, what type of resources would you find helpful?

I had to go through it before to narrow down my schools, yes.

1. Have you used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? If yes, what was your experience?

I did it before during a transition seminar, but I have not done it on my own.

1. What would you hope to learn by using a GI Bill Comparison Tool?
2. What factors would you like to compare about schools or institutions?

Factors most interested in: Accreditation and most bang for my buck. I consider whether they are military-friendly schools.

Okay, now we're going to look at the va.gov website 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 to each page, as well as what you are thinking as you engage with each page. If you have questions about what information needs to go in a particular field, it’s likely that many other Veterans will too. This may seem strange at first, but it helps us understand what you are thinking and helps us so much with our work.

**Scenario #1 (10 minutes)**

Do you have a dream school? Using the GI Bill Comparison Tool, how would you find out what benefits you would receive at that school?

The University of Southern California.

Please talk aloud and let us know what you are thinking as you explore the site.

I would click on that link that says learn about education programs and compare benefits by school.

[On school profile page] I saw JAMIS. I don’t know what that is. So, I know what yellow ribbon is. Would this be something I’d be asking for? Am I making the assumption here? What degree I’d be looking at…I believe engineering. I don’t know what kicker bonus is. I’d have to look into that. Have I used my gi bill before? No, For class location, I’d have to look at the availability of classes. [Retention rate] Is that true, that 69% of students are veterans? Student complaints…I’d be curious to know what those are. Regional accreditation, that’s good to know. Single point of contact, that’s good to know. Credit for military training, that’s great. STEM, that’s great. The yellow ribbon historical data, that’s good to know, almost 25%. I would have to look more into the school. It is a high price tag, whether there’s scholarships or grants I could get. To your knowledge, the housing allowance, that is the money you’d be getting a month for your gi bill? That’s not bad. It’s still below the cost of living.

*[After the particpant has explored the site and shared thoughts aloud.]*

1. What are your first impressions?

I’m happy with that. There is a lot more information than I was expecting. Everything I’ve looked at, they give you the basics of what is covered. This already tells me how much I’m paying out of pocket. It looks like it’s telling you about the two semesters, twice a year.

1. What information on these pages is the most important to you?

That it is a school that accepts 9/11 and that it is veteran-friendly and that I didn’t have to do a lot of searching to answer my question.

1. What is confusing or unclear? Why?

It looks pretty clear. The only thing I would say is that there’s a capability for veteran information but there’s no data. Without this information, I can’t see the graduation rate. With the tuition rate being 10k a year, it is pretty daunting.

1. How trustworthy and reliable do you consider this information to be?

It may be more out of pocket than what I’m seeing here.

**Scenario #2 (10 minutes)**

Let say you signed up for the GI Bill last April so you could take a couple of classes at your local community college. After taking the classes, you decided that you'd like to get a degree in engineering. The two schools you are considering are University of Florida and Florida State. You'd like to maximize your benefits. Using the site, how would you decide which school offers you the greatest benefits?

I would have to search each of the schools. I would have to do a comparison. Is there an easier way to do that? If you can go down and pick the school, if there’s a way to get it so I can have a second one here [ search results].

[looking at uof] No out of pocket tuition. Look at that, for out of state. No student complaints, that’s good. They are not a yellow ribbon school. [he went back to search results to search for the other school, then the landing page; seems like search should be available on school profile page].

[fsu] so this is 9k a year cheaper than to go to uof. This is a yellow ribbon school. So they have not paid much for yellow ribbon, only 10 students out of 1000 [598]. I wonder if there’s a way to see why more students aren’t using yellow ribbon or not authorized. Smaller amount of people that use it. I would be looking at FSU because it’s more cost effective and veteran friendly than UofF

*[After the participant has explored the prototype and shared thoughts aloud.]*

**Section 510 Follow up questions**

1. What are your thoughts on the contents of the gray box on the right?

I’m pretty happy with it. I do not have a confusion. Actually, that is something confusing I just noticed here. Why is there no spring tuition showing here? If you look below, it says there’s a housing allowance for it. So I’d be curious on that one.

1. What are your thoughts on receiving an estimate vs. an exact amount for your housing allowance?

It’s a fair statement because you don’t know the exact amount. It’s giving you an idea of, I’m assuming, most of their programs, so it’s giving you an average. It’s giving you a glance, not a true number of what it is. It could have changed in the last 3 years, but from what I see, I can make a determination.

1. What are your thoughts on the questions on the left? How they might be useful?

I was trying to think of a way if there was anything more that I would ask for. For the most part, no. It broke things down. I didn’t have any other questions. I guess maybe it’s a little too much information. I would like to see if there’s a veteran’s program or a veterans program office, someplace where I could get more answers.

1. If logging in would give you a more precise estimate, would you take the time to do so, or is the estimate sufficient?

Yes, absolutely, because I want to make the most informed decision. I’m looking at the cost of fuel. Do I want to live closer? So the most accurate it can be is the most beneficial to me.

1. What are your thought on the 2nd to last question on the left ("Did you use your Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit before January 1, 2018?")?

9/11: I’d be curious on why…I did not use it before. I guess if I’d used it prior to then, I’d want to click on that. If I clicked yes, does it change anything?

Zip: I am surprised they do not do a strictly online classes with most colleges do, that way. For me, personally, I’d be living in Nevada where there’s not a lot of schools online, but for me, that’s one of the things I’d be looking at that they do not offer a strictly online program.

**Section 107 Follow up questions**

1. If you chose a large state school with campuses in multiple cities, would you expect the housing allowance to be the same or different for each campus?

I would assume so, but some of the differences might be cost of living. Benefits received might be different, this might change. With having to go back to the search for Florida State, I’d have to go back and do a comparison for the campuses listed there.

This part right here [yellow ribbon alert] what is that referring to? It says 99k.

1. How would you decide which campus you'd like to attend?
2. What are your thought on the last question on the left ("Will the majority of your classes be on the main campus?")?
3. Let's look at the results page for a moment. As you think about large schools like the university of California, would you expect to see a card for each University or one for each branch of a university?

**Scenario #3 (2 minutes)**

[If the participant is eligible for multiple GI Bills] How would you use the Comparison tool to determine which GI Bill to apply for?

Looking at the benefits that I received for each because speaking to advisors, I found out that the 9/11 offered more flexibility and I seem to get more benefits than using the Montgomery. I’ve heard some people were able to use a fair amount of their Montgomery bill and then later able to switch over to the 9/11 and use the full benefit. I need to verify that, though.

I would go to the questions and click on the comparison [switch the bill there],

[he went back to search the other gi bill] so using Montgomery gi bill and the location ,it looks like they were the same. [he then searched for dependents]

**Follow up questions**

1. What are your thoughts on the process of comparing GI Bill?

It was easy to use. I was able to quickly pick the program I wanted. I was able to see them, and it actually showed me that there was more offered than what I was expecting.

1. What was easy and did you find challenging?
2. What would make the process of comparing GI Bills easier?

As I had said previously, it would be nice if I had the ability to compare them both side to side. I could also do a second browser.

**Post-Task Interview (5 minutes)**

Now that you’ve had a chance to explore the site, I’m going to ask you a few final questions. Some of these questions I’ve already asked you, but I want to ask them again, now that you’ve seen the website.

* What do you like most about this website?

I thought it was a lot easier than what I thought it’d be. It has a lot of schools. It breaks it down to the online, in person or both, so it allows a lot of flexibility in making a decision. This allowed me to make a more open decision. It seemed easy to use.

* What enhancements or features would you recommend to improve the overall usefulness of this site?

I like the ability to compare things. I’m a visual person, I like seeing them side by side, so that helps me make a more informed decision on how to best use my benefits. I wish the information was a little bit more current. Then again, finances change, costs change. I like the most up to date decision. It makes it more difficult to make that decision.

* Would you use this website in real life? Why or why not?

I plan to use it a lot starting in the next couple of months.

* Would you recommend this tool to your friends? Why or why not?

Yes, absolutely.

* On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest, how would you rate the tool's ability to give you the information you need to make a decision on which school to attend based on the benefits you'll receive?

I’d give it a 4.

* On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest, how likely are you to use a tool like this?

5.

* Assuming you had access to all three, would you prefer to view a site like the comparison tool using a desktop, tablet or mobile?

All three, honestly. I mostly use stuff on a computer. I don’t have a smartphone. I do have a tablet.

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

I guess have this site added to the transitional readiness classes. They have a lot to cover, but have it available to them or have it in a different class. I had to use google to try to get this information. I wish I’d have known before.

**Thank-You and Closing**

*[The moderator concludes each session by thanking the participant for their time and for offering his/her opinions and suggestions.]*

Thank you very much for taking the time to give us your feedback today. We really appreciate your help!

How would you expect to learn more about different campuses offered by schools?

Using this tool, I would expect when it came up with the uoff, that it would have each of the campuses. I know of a school that has multiple campuses. Ok, this actually has it [the search field dropdown.] that’s great that they have that there. As long as they are all listed, that could make a difference for me.

What did you think of the search process when you first looked at uoff and had to go search for the second school, fsu?

That was easy, because I was able to click at the top and click on one of those tabs [breadcrumbs]. But no, that was very simple to search.