Participant: calvin  *(participant 10)*   
Date: 10/20/2020   
Time: 12:00 pm

**Discussion Guide for Comparison Tool Redesign (Veterans and Beneficiaries)**

*When the participant is ready, begin the session with the following intro*

**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're going to talk about your education journey - what's important to you in selecting schools, how you go about finding information and ways to streamline your experience with the VA.

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 are not testing your ability. 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 the 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 - 5 minutes**

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

* Are you currently using or have you ever used VA education benefits?
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - Was that benefit yours or was it transferred to you?
    - When did you start school?  
      *I applied to GW and a couple of other schools that were along with how I did in high school and its my 3rd year and I’m doing well, planning on graduating in the spring so within 3 years and ive been very happy w the experience.   
        
      I used a few websites to compare schools… world report, Us news, um and when it came to tuition and stuff I used resources the school put out.*   
        
      I looked at the course catalog of some of the schools once I narrowed it down.
  + If no, do you plan on using your benefits in the near future?
    - Which benefit?
    - Is that benefit yours or was the benefit transferred to you?
    - Where are you in the school selection process?
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?
  + If yes, what did you use it for?
  + How did you hear about it?
  + Do you remember when you used it (while researching schools, after you had picked a school)?

**First Topic: Researching and Picking Schools - 15 minutes**

Let's talk about when you first decided to go to school.

* What made you decide to go back to school?
* What was most important to you when you were looking for potential schools?
  + What resources did you use to research schools?
  + What was the most difficult part about picking a school?
  + Was there any information you wanted to have, but couldn't find?  
    *sometimes its hard to get a feel of what the classes are going to be like but that’s something you wont find out until enrolling. Um how much financial aid you can expect to get, schools will tell you the average but that doesn’t give you a very clear picture on how much im going to get coming from my family. Its not that clear how much ill get from a school based on where im coming from. It’s a mystery.*
* If you've started school, is there anything you know now about the school that you wish you had known earlier?  
  *I don’t think there is anything big in particular…I would say (USnews and world report) its pretty accurate.*
* Are there any specific programs that you as a military-connected student are interested in?

**Second Topic: Comparison Tool - 15 minutes**

*Facilitator brings up CT* I'm going to bring up the GI Bill Comparison Tool so we can walk through it together. As we go through it, let me know what catches your eye or what information you think is valuable.

Landing page:

* What would you do on this first page?

Search Results page:Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

*The left side filter is not what he expected.*

*um*

* What do you think of the search results?
  + Do you see the school you're looking for?
  + What do you think of the information you see?

School profile:A screenshot of a computer screen

Description automatically generated  
um so this is easy to understand. One thing that’s not immediately obvious is the difference between the tuition and fees charged and the out of pocket tuition… um is it the care of the 56,935 irrelevent or is it just two different prices? So my assumption is that the out of pocket tuition here is… so the total paid to you is pretty straight forward but its just a matter of figuring out how it got added up.

* What do you think of what you're seeing?A screenshot of a computer screen

  Description automatically generated  
  *this is nice I can change this if I am getting financial aid or scholarships… that’s cool because I can see that it changes that balance (in estimated benefits per term) if I had used this tool going into college it would have been helpful because it lets me know how my benefits change when I am getting a certain amount of aid.*   
  A screenshot of a computer screen

  Description automatically generated *hm so this wouldn’t change any of my benefits but its nice to see because I am considering taking some classes at Georgetown, so its nice to see how that effects aid or my understanding is that it doesn’t impact it all, costs just the same as if I were to take a class at GW  
  A screenshot of a computer screen

  Description automatically generated  
  oh here I see I can put scholarships in, this helps a great deal because its much more specific, the only thing I think of immediately is I didn’t know exactly how much scholarship money id be getting going into school so I might have just based this number on whatever the average was that the school was telling me. Regardless its really helpful to know how its going to effect as things get broken down.  
    
  Graphical user interface, application

  Description automatically generated  
  hmm yeah so I don’t know if I was interested in this how I would make this act with the rest of the website… ill click on another one… (Student veterans group) um so I guess these are the veteran programs offered at GW.. it didn’t look like that immediately but as I’m reading through these. yeah Hey calvin, thanks for talking with us today, when you were looking at the veteran programs, you mentioned after exploring these weren’t what you initially expected, what did you initially think it was?Graphical user interface, application

  Description automatically generated  
  um this is helpful because this is the housing costs in the VA area… one thing I would probably if I was using this going into college is to look at these address, are these dorms or separate satellite schools?*
  + What stands out to you?
  + What do you think of the information you see?
  + From what you see here, what information would be most helpful to you?
  + What information is NOT important to you?
  + Is there anything else you would like to see here?

Are you familiar with any of the following programs:

* Student Vet Groups
* STEM Scholarship
* Yellow Ribbon
* Would you be interested in learning more about these programs?

**Final Topic: Making It Easier - 5 minutes**

We've talked about researching and picking a school and also the Comparison Tool.

* If you could make the process of selecting a school simple and easy, talk me through what the ideal process would look like.
  + What type of information about a school would be critical to know?
  + What people or websites would you talk to to help make a decision?
  + Are there any parts of the Comparison Tool that you would change?
  + Are there any parts of the Comparison Tool you would keep the same?

**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!

**Sample Conversation Guides *(note: these links point to resources in the va.gov-team GitHub repo)***

* [Scheduling Accessibility and Usability Study: Complex Recruit, Highly Variable based on User Profile](https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/blob/master/products/health-care/appointments/research/2017-studies/access-usability/access-usability-conversation-guide.md)
* [Veteran ID Card Discovery Interview](https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/blob/master/products/veteran-id-cards/research/discovery/discovery-conversation-guide.md)