**Discussion Guide for Comparison Tool Redesign (School Certifying Officials)**

**SCO3 – Leticia Vidana**

*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 the Comparison Tool.

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.

* Briefly, what is your role, how long have you been a SCO or School administrator, and how do you interact with service-connected students?
  + We’re all kind of working remotely. I’m working from home. One SCO in the office. Back in the day we would have students come in and we would walk them through getting their benefits. Now we walk through that process over the phone. So that’s the beginning of it – once a student is enrolled in courses, then we make sure they’re certified.
* How many GI Bill students are at your school? Presently online? Our supervisor that tells us how many all together. I can’t find it, but I want to say like 6000.
* Does your school have a Veteran center? Yes, it’s still open. So there’s 12 SCOs altogether. We have our downtown Phoenix campus and other campuses. That’s aside from our Director, Assistant Director, advocate team.
  + If so, how large is it?
  + If not, is there additional staff that supports military-connected students and processes certifications?
* Have you used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?

**First Topic: Handling Questions - 10 minutes**

* What kind of questions do you typically field from Veterans? From other beneficiaries such as spouses or dependents?
  + At the start, it’s depending on the chapter. Chapter 33 will ask about how to start using benefits, how do I apply, where do I apply and like what are the steps. We send them a checklist or a guide to smoothly go through the process of getting their benefits. How much am I getting paid? How much and when will I get paid?
  + For me at my level, they’re already invested at ASU. Most questions would probably be in Admissions – we have someone that serves that role for Veterans.
  + Go about finding the answers to those questions – well, I like to explain to them what rate of pursuit is and how that will affect their BAH and their resident courses. The difference in distant and resident courses. I don’t ever tell them exact numbers because that can get sticky. A couple of us do this – we send the GI Bill Comparison Tool to students so they can generate their own numbers. Never heard back from a student so don’t know….
  + I’ve played with it a few times…put in numbers such as rate of pursuit to see what they can get etc.
  + Originally hear about it? Through training, a manassa training I went to. I played with it a bit to see if it was something I can use. I haven’t trained others in how to use it. That’s not normally my department. We don’t generally discuss finances with students – it can get sticky, so we try and be careful. It is really helpful for me to send to students and they can know where to go to ask questions. We also have a VET success counselor on campus who helps guide students who are in question about what they’re going to receive. He’s really helpful when students that have detailed specific questions about their benefits – how to stretch them out, if there’s a hiccup in the process. We have many students who are switching chapter benefits…figuring out how to apply and have things switched over so they aren’t shooting themselves in the foot.
  + Other types of info you look at the CT for? No, not generally. I don’t usually go to the OJT. It’s just usually hey…
  + It would be great to have…ok so, in regards to our school….let me see
  + What do they ask about the most?
  + What do they ask about your school?
  + Are there any pain points?
  + Is there anything you aren't able to help them with?
  + How much interest is there from your GI Bill students for the Yellow Ribbon program?
* If you have questions about education benefits, how do you go about finding the answer?
  + What types of questions do you normally have?
  + How do you learn about new benefits or changes with the GI Bill?
  + How do you pass that information to students?
* Do you reference VA sites for your work?
  + If yes, which ones?
  + How often do you visit these sites?
  + What information are you looking for?
  + Do you use non-VA, third party sites for your work?

**Second Topic: Usage of the Comparison Tool - 20 minutes**

You said you had used the Comparison Tool before.

* This isn’t usually what I see – it just says. GI Bill tool Comparison.
* I know what the student’s status is – and I put in their eligibility rate. Usually we have a lot of ours who are online and in-person. It’s usually just the Tempe one that I look at. I’m usually just able to pick Tempe…and this is really the extent that I use this. Just the general information I see when I use it. Sometimes I’ll give them an estimate. A lot of time I forget about the book stipend.
* What is this Principles of Excellence? I wasn’t sure what that was. The Yellow Ribbon – that’s good to have for students to see. I know we do Yellow Ribbon differently than a lot of schools
* Do you field a lot of questions about Yellow Ribbon? How do you do it differently? Notifying those students – that would be great to put on here. If you’re out of state, you may be charged out of state fees. It’s usually catch students that come in as non-resident, so pleas apply. They usually ask how much it’s going to cover – and that can conflict with scholarships because tey are out of state.
* Use it differently? We use it just for out of state charges -and they were using it for I want to say like a separate program.
* Yellow ribbon – answer your questions? More of a definition about, or an example of what that means…maybe it was a private school and that’s why they did it differently. I don’t know if they understand what out of state charges are. I don’t even know if that’s something you have a visual on.
* Even as a Veteran myself, I didn’t know what Yellow Ribbon was. It would be good to have a clear explanation of what that is. I like to see the numbers.
* Opened Student Veteran Group – is that something we need to update? (After opening Learn more)
* We do have a Veteran group – we have a few actually. That would be great to post that. I don’t know if that’s something our outreach group would want. Like our contact information.
* I guess that’s Trey (Vet Success)
* We also have some commitment Scholarship – I know that can cause some confusion for Military Assistance students.
* Oh interesting I didn’t even know this had this here (Student Complaints).
* Any info helpful for you? For me as an SCO – not for me, but helpful for our students. Especially for our online students – who have lots of questions on TA. And have that explained to them. We also have CH33 students who use TA. Maybe how it would deduct…the time it deducts from their rate of pursuit…okay if you go this amount you’ll save this amount of time. The rate of pursuit is always confusing for students – we have a few terms so it kind of confuses them full time. The first half of the semester and they think its going to cover the entire semester. Rate of pursuit calculator would be amazing – I don’t even know if that’s possible with the variety of schools and terms, but that would be helpful.
* Anything you would like to modify? You’re asking me what areas of this I would want to be able to manage? Yeah, it would be great…I’m sure Trey uses this when he’s walking through it with students. Someone mentioned that what the tool is missing is a cap – how tuition caps at a certain point and they aren’t charged any more at that point. The ability to add scholarship information or funding assistance that would help our students. Maybe even – might be too much, but highlighting the events we do for our students. The things we do for our Veteran students. We hold a stoll ceremony for our Veterans alone. That I think they like. Obviously the staff….yeah, that would make more sense for us to do. I’m not really sure who does this. We do have some people who are new and aren’t listed on here. I’m looking here at the historical data…is TA not accounted for? Even the commitment scholarships…is this showing what ASU has paid or ASU and VA. What does that number mean when it says Total?
* How often do you visit the tool?
* How did you originally hear about the Comparison Tool?
* Did you receive any training on the Comparison Tool?
  + Do you train others in how to use it?
  + How long did it take you to feel comfortable using the tool?
* What common tasks are you typically trying to accomplish on the tool?
  + What kind of information are you typically looking at?
  + The tool is geared towards Veterans, but is there any information that is helpful for you?
    - Is there any additional information or functionality that you would like to see?
  + How accurate is the information on your school?
    - If information on your school isn't accurate, what do you do?
    - How long does it take for information to be fixed?
  + How do you find out about changes/updates to the Comparison Tool?
  + Are there any other sites that you use to perform similar tasks?

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

We've talked about the Comparison Tool and finding out information on education benefits.

* If you could change the Comparison Tool to meet your needs as a SCO, talk me through what the tool would look like.
  + What would it do?
  + What would you change?
  + What would you keep the same?

*Consider asking about Yellow Ribbon program again*

**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!