Participant: *SCO Leticia (participant 13)*   
Date: 10/21/2020   
Time: 1:14 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?
* Tell me about your role as a SCO  
  *well we are all working from home right now, but back in the day we would have students come in, if they had questions we would walk them through their benefits and how to apply… now its all online so we use email or on the phone to walk them through that. That’s the beginning… once they are enrolled we are the middle man for them and ASU (the school)*
* How many GI students are at your school?  
  *presently… um… let me see if I can find this data that we usally collect from our supervisor. Um I want to say about 6,000.*
* Thinking about typical times what kind of questions are you fielding from veteran students?  
  *um students will ask how do I get started using my benefits, where do I apply, how? Now ive applied, what do I do? Usually we send them a checklist because they ask, how do I get paid, how much, & when?*
* Are there specific questions they ask about ASU?  
  *um well at my level they are already invested in ASU so they would talk to the admissions for that.*  
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - Was that benefit yours or was it transferred to you?
    - When did you start school?
  + 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?  
  um I don’t ever tell them exact numbers any more because that gets really tricky and we have been told to refrain from that but what I will do is send them the GI Bill comparison tool to calculate ethe numbers on their own but ive never actually heard back from a student weather it was good or bad…   
    
  I have used the tool before just to see if the amounts are correct or to check on me but that’s it.
  + If yes, what did you use it for?
  + How did you hear about it?  
    through training.
  + Do you remember when you used it (while researching schools, after you had picked a school)?
* Are there other types of info (other than housing allowance you look at the CT for?)  
  um I don’t go to the OJT or \_\_\_ so no not really.
* If a student were thinking of coming to ASU what would we add?  
  um… hmmm… that is a good question… im thinking uh it would be great to have um… not that it would, okay so in regards to our school… let me see…

**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?
* If you've started school, is there anything you know now about the school that you wish you had known earlier?
* 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:

* 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

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huh so this is really the extent that I use this you know… just to see what im seeing (looking at estimated benefits) um I often forget about the book stipend so that’s good to see there.   
  
um what is this.. principles of excellence… okay. I wasn’t sure what this was but that’s good to have. Yellow ribbon, that’s really great to have posted for students to see. We are a yellow ribbon school… um I know some schools use the yellow ribbon differently than we do but uh… yeha that’s what we use it for okay… student veteran group? Oh okay so is this something we need to update? Huh okay… we do have a veteran group but that would be great to have posted there Im not usre if we need to have our out reach team added to this or what… hmm Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated  
oh interesting… I didn’t even know we had this here… looking at SCOS okay that’s great. Hmmm…

* What do you think of what you're seeing?
  + What stands out to you?
  + What do you think of the information you see?
  + As a sco is there info that’s helpful for you?  
    as a SCO not so much, for students, yes. A lot of students have questions about TA so id like to see a TA option here to see how much that’s covered. I know some students on CH 33 also use TA and that can cause a lot of confusion so that would be good to see and then also how it deducts from benefits. – weight of pursuit.
* What areas would you like someone from this school to be able to edit or manage?  
  um… yeah, that would be great to have. Im pretty sure troy uses this tool a lot so it would be nice to have him be able to go in and…. I know we had a brief discussion about this… the tool is missing a cap to show how that tution caps at some locations? (not sure if that’s what she said) maybe even having the ability to add scholarship information… any of the other funding assistance that would help our students. Or and maybe this is too much but highlighting the events we do for our veterans. Um and managing our staff names because we have some new people that are listed here and some that aren’t even listed on here… so you know. Graphical user interface, website

  Description automatically generated  
  looking here at the historical data. Is TA not counted for in the historical information? Is this just showing what VSU has paid or what VSU and the VA has paid together? What is that total number?   
  + 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)