**Discussion Guide for Stakeholders**

**Ashlynne - TAPS**

Thanks so much for joining us today. Our team is investigating how different users engage with the GI Bill Comparison Tool and are interested in hearing how you use the Comparison Tool in your work to support schools, employers, and their military-connected students.

**Warm-up Questions**

* [Name & Role]
* I now use it a couple times a week in my policy role.
* I work for TAPS. We are the national organization for families of the fallen. We’re primarily using CH35 for Fry scholars. I work with legislatures to make sure benefits are there for surviving families.
* So I also forgot to mention I’m also on the VA’s education group. Generally I use it when helping surviving families…they are looking at different schools, what their options are. A lot of times people will come to us with a list of schools they are interested in.
* So generally we start with basics about them. If they’re from NC, are they looking for in-state and out-of-state. Many have Fry and CH35, but they can’t use them at the same time. They may say they want to go to Med school, but 2 years in to it,they realize they hate Biology. So the different routes they could go – in/out of state, Yellow Ribbon.
* So generally the tool is very helpful – top level basic information. We use it as a starting point to research school. There are definite downsides. We have had people say it doesn’t appear – so they’ll type in Virginia Tech and nothing comes up, but that’s not the full name and people don’t always realize its not the full name. One thing is making it more user-friendly. We’re working with 16-18 year olds. So definitely a website that has a lot of terms is not user-friendly for that population. I think understanding what it is they’re reading is helpful. It says what type of school, but there’s nowhere for them to see what that means. For those of us in. higher ed, but a teenager doesn’t understand the difference in a for profit and state school. Explaining what the acronyms are and explaining these things. Many have been isolated from the military experience. Plus a younger population.
* Other search issues? Being able to search by radius would be useful. You can put in the name of a town, but its not going to give schools in a 20 mile radius. If you’re in Fort Hood and you’re going to a small town, being able to put that city in and say within 20 miles of that city. The complaint system is great, but it doesn’t explain what they are in a way that is easy to understand. It’s just X amount of complaints and not what they are. I have not tried to submit any complaints. I think including information for SCOs. That would be really information – contact information. Making it easier for the students to contact the school. FDA does something similar for chapters – you can search for schools in the area and let’s them see who the point of contact is. So they can reach out and ask what its like for Veteran student. Some SCOs are great and others aren’t . Mine at American was truly awful.
* What does military friendly mean? There’s no real definition. Does that mean they have a Veteran chapter, a lounge? It’s pretty key for a survivor community. We frequently run into SCO who don’t know survivor benefits or CH35. What is key is that the SCO actually know these things. To give them the ability to call the school and see if they know how to do it. The GI Bill doesn’t break down Veterans versus others. I think it would be helpful for the survivor community to have that breakdown. The military Veteran space – they look for people they can connect to. They aren’t going to connect with other 18-19 year olds.
* We work a lot with surviving spouses who tend to connect with military than typical students.
* Change anything? I think the search tool would be great. Being able to look at schools within a certain distance. I would like to see the elimination of the high schools. I think its useless and just clogs the search filter. The high schools are specifically approved for surviving childs. They aren’t going to use GI Bill benefits at those schools.
* It allows high school students to receive benefits while still in high school. It’s a Vietnam-era thing. You had many Vets who dropped out of high school and when they came back, they went to finish. So it’s not really applicable anymore.
* I think the exact name of the school is a thing. I know that’s been brought up. Not knowing a school because they don’t know the specific name of it.
* Change in EYB? I am familiar with it. I like it in theory. A lot of them don’t understand what the changes mean – did you use the bill prior to 2019? It’s important, but also confuses people. It’s the one piece I don’t like about it. They have a very elementary understanding of their own benefits. Someone loses their benefits and they don’t understand even what benefits they lost. It just confuses and frustrates them more.
* They all find the tool generally useful.
* Anything not to change? As is, I like the breakdown of the benefits. I think that piece is well done. It shows what you get in Fall and Spring.
* I would under – which GI Bill benefits do you want to use – I would add Fry Scholarship. It falls under Post 9/11, but they don’t realize that. I think throwing it in there could be useful.
* Our survivors are frequently confused since their spouse tended to die on Active Duty, so they don’t know what to pick. We typically tell them to say No. It’s one of the things that are even confusing on applying for benefits. Possibly add the word “currently” – is your spouse currently on active duty.
* When people come in with a list, other than cost are there any other factors that really help them narrow down their choices?
* OPTIONAL: Could you tell us a bit about how your work supports Veterans?
* How long have you been doing this work?

**Use of the Comparison Tool**

* How does the GI Bill Comparison Tool factor into your work?   
  + About how often do you use the Comparison Tool?
* What tasks do you use the Comparison Tool to accomplish?
  + What kind of information are you typically looking for?
  + What do you do with that information?
  + Are there other sites or tools you use to perform similar tasks?
  + Any other tasks? (repeat series, as needed)
* OPTIONAL: What are your thoughts on the accuracy of the information in the tool?
  + If you find information on schools that isn't accurate, what do you do?
  + How long does it take for information to be fixed?
* OPTIONAL: How do you find out about changes/updates to the Comparison Tool?
  + How effectively does that meet your needs?

**Making Improvements**

* If you could change the Comparison Tool to better meet your needs, what would you be able to do with it that you can’t now?  
  + How would that be beneficial to you?
* What else would you like it to do that it doesn’t already?
* Would you have any interest or need to update data in the Comparison Tool? If yes, what would you want to update?
* Is there anything within the Comparison Tool that you find incredibly useful as-is and think shouldn’t be changed?

**Thank-You and Closing**

Thank you! Those are all the questions we had for you today. Do you have any questions for me?

[ If time allows, ask for Qs from the team ]

We really appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with us today. Your feedback will help us make ensure the Comparison Tool works well for those who rely on it.

Thank you so much and enjoy the rest of your day!