**CT Comparison Testing – June 2021**

**Participant # 6 – Mikaela**

**Top Observations**

* Easily conducts location search and wonders if you click on a letter what happens. Would click on a few letters to see the different options… I’d click around to get some names. I’d probably stay in the downtown DC area.
* Wonders what happens when you click on the search result school name… “Oh interesting, this [profile page] isn’t what I was expecting.” “This is pretty convenient.”
* What did you think of finding schools(1 is very easy and 5 is very hard)? Name search: 2, Location search, 1.
* Easily able to select schools to compare, access the tray and click compare. Wonders what happens when I scroll down… Sees compare box and selects to compare.
* “Really like the compare institutions bar at the bottom.” Reads that you can compare “2 to 3 institutions”.
* Compare Page / Ratings: Mentions that there are no school ratings. If there aren’t actual ratings, would be helpful to link to another rating site. Ratings are really important to me. Costs are all the same so ratings are going to be important.
* Wonders how she can get to the “summary page” from the comparison page. Wonders if the name of the school at the top would go to that page… “that would be really helpful.”
* Important on Comparison page: Wonders if the # of GI bill students is on the comparison page. Knowing that is an important data point for Veterans.
* Important on Comparison page “Oh the yellow ribbon is there!” Really likes that other Veteran programs are listed. “I really like the Veteran programs at the bottom, it’s nice that the other programs are listed.”
* Comparison page: Thinks a comparison to a “median” school would be helpful. How do they compare to an average university.
* Participant is pleasantly surprised that you can select & deselect schools for comparing from any of the pages.
* Tries to click Compare checkbox to add 4th school to tray… “I think this is happening because I can only compare 3 institutions” “I have to go back to search by location…” “Oh wait… what if I click “Compare institutions”. I can just select remove”
* **It would have been nice if I wouldn’t have been able to select compare and there was a message that said “you can only select 2 or 3 schools”**
* DEA recipient who knows GI Bill is pro-rated to %. ARE BENEFITS ACCURATE? “Yeah, I think so. If there was a way… maybe at the top… to modify it to your benefit level…” “My dad had 60%, the numbers wouldn’t stack out like this.”
* 2 (easy) – I’m surprised by how easy it was [to switch out the compared school]. Because I had already had 3 to compare, it was a little confusing to figure out why I couldn’t select the comparison.” It could be confusing for people who are older.

OTHER

“I was motivated by studying in DC so would search by location.” Types “District of Columbia” and select from autocomplete… lowers radius to 25 miles & selects search.

What’s Important in a school? **Affordability** – number 1. trying to minimize amount of loans she was taking. Prestige – good school, good connections, good program, can I get a good job. Secondary – Location, quality of classes, ratings online (College Niche, College Rater, sites that give students an opportunity to rank & rate their schools )

Does the GI Bill Tool mention the Yellow Ribbon at all? Expects it would. Yellow Ribbon is one of the significant reasons people attend GW. But also knows not everyone is aware of it. Thinks it should be very prominent (top of page)

ASKS ABOUT WHERE THE GIBCT IS LOCATED ON VA.GOV; MENTIONS THEY WERE HAVING A HARD TIME TRYING TO FIND THE GI BILL COMPARISON TOOL.

Initial search “Went well because I had a location I wanted to go to. Might be nice to have “Popular locations” where there are a lot of schools. Wonders if a name search for “American University” would show universities “like” American. Would probably google American University because there’s not an option to see schools “like” American University.”

**Research Questions**

**Compare Drawer:**

Do users notice the Comparison drawer?

Is comparison drawer behavior effective when the user conducts multiple searches to select schools?

How many schools do users think they can compare at once?

**Navigation:**

Are users able to easily navigate between the search results, the comparison drawer and the comparison page?

How do users interact with the interface when they need to conduct multiple searches?

Which components/pages do users prefer to use to add or remove schools from the comparison? Are they able to do this effectively?

**Compare page:**

What data fields are users interested in comparing?

Which ones are most important?

Any fields they aren't interested in?

Any additional others they would want to see?

Do users notice the sticky header?

Do users believe the sticky header is useful?

Do users notice the "Highlight differences" functionality?

Do users find the "Highlight differences" functionality useful?

**Warm-up**

* Military status (e.g. Veteran, child, spouse)? Dependent of Army Veteran.
* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits? Used in the past. Ch35 Dependent’s Educational Assistance. Started school in 2018, studying political science.
* When you first decided to go back to school, what factors were important to you in picking school options?
  + **Affordability** – number 1. trying to minimize amount of loans she was taking.
  + Prestige – good school, good connections, good program, can I get a good job.
  + Secondary – Location, quality of classes, ratings online (College Niche, College Rater, sites that give students an opportunity to rank & rate their schools )
  + Do you remember any of the schools you were considering?
    - GW. Wanted to study in DC so also looked at Georgetown, American, Catholic, Loyola University in Baltimore.
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?
  + Seen it. Helped Dad use it, too.

**First Task: Finding schools**

* Could you show me how you'd use the Comparison Tool to learn about schools you might be interested in attending?
  + ASKS ABOUT WHERE THE GIBCT IS LOCATED ON VA.GOV; MENTIONS THEY WERE HAVING A HARD TIME TRYING TO FIND THE GI BILL COMPARISON TOOL.
  + I was motivated by studying in DC so would search by location. Type “District of Columbia” and select from autocomplete… lower radius to 25 miles & select search.
  + I’m seeing a map with results on side… would start zooming in closer to dc because the results have a lot of Maryland results.
  + Wonders if you click on a letter what happens. Would click on a few letters to see the different options… I’d click around to get some names. I’d probably stay in the downtown DC area.
  + Wonders if when you select B, if it automatically scrolls to that in results.
  + Clicking around… looking for name recognition. Would go back to the results I recognize…
  + Would look at school rating. Would want to see the ratings of several schools. It’d be cool if they had ratings. At this point, I’d probably stop & pull up another website to look up these universities.
  + Wonders what happens when you click on the search result school name… “Oh interesting, this isn’t what I was expecting.” “This is pretty convenient.” Reviews profile page.
  + Does the GI Bill Tool mention the Yellow Ribbon at all? Expects it would. Yellow Ribbon is one of the significant reasons people attend GW. But also knows not everyone is aware of it. Thinks it should be very prominent (top of page)

**Things to watch for:**

* What type(s) of search does the user conduct? Location
* Does the user notice the Compare checkbox? Nope, not visible at all.

**Upon task completion:**

* How do you think that went? Went well because I had a location I wanted to go to. Might be nice to have “Popular locations” where there are a lot of schools. Wonders if a name search for “American University” would show universities “like” American. Would probably google American University because there’s not an option to see schools “like” American University.
* 1 is very easy and 5 is very hard, what did you think of finding schools? Name: 2, Location, 1.

**Second Task: Comparing schools**

* How would you use the Comparison Tool to determine which school would be the best option for you?
  + Back to location search (like that it saves the last location I searched).
  + Wonders what happens when I scroll down… Sees compare box and selects to compare.
  + Really like the compare institutions bar at the bottom. Reads that you can compare “2 to 3 institutions”. Click compare… “Takes you to a new webpage”
  + Mentions that there are no school ratings. If there aren’t actual ratings, would be helpful to link to another rating site. Ratings are really important to me. Costs are all the same so ratings are going to be important.
  + At this point, I’d probably have 3 tabs open looking at the school websites / ratings.
  + Wonders how she can get to the summary page from the comparison page. Wonders if the name of the school at the top would go to that page… “that would be really helpful.”
  + Notes that the tuition numbers in the comparison view don’t seem accurate and finds that confusing.
  + What stands out: Ratings. Because the benefits are so similar.
  + Wonders if the # of GI bill students is on the comparison page. Knowing that is an important data point for Veterans.
  + Looking at comparison page “Oh the yellow ribbon is there!” Really likes that other Veteran programs are listed.

**Things to watch for:**

* What type(s) of search does the user conduct?
* Does the user notice the Compare drawer?
* Do users notice the sticky header?
* Do users notice the "Highlight differences" functionality?
* Is user able to easily add schools to the compare tray?
* Is the user able to easily navigate to the compare page?

**Upon task completion:**

* How do you think that went?
  + Really well. I really like this platform.
  + I really like the programs at the bottom – nice that the other programs are listed.
  + Thinks a comparison to a “median” school would be helpful. How do they compare to an average university.
  + Likes that hitting the back button returns you to the initial search conducted.
* 1 is very easy and 5 is very hard, what did you think of comparing schools?
  + 1.

**Third Task: YAY Harvard!**

* How would you use the Comparison Tool to see how **Harvard** compared to some of your other school options?
  + Search by name…
  + Identifies top universities.
  + “I have to go back to search by location”
    - Thinking she had to retrace her steps to deselect from the location where she originally selected. Pleasantly surprised that you can select & deselect from any of the pages.
  + Tries to click it… “I think this is happening because I can only compare 3 institutions” “I have to go back to search by location…” “Oh wait… what if I click “Compare institutions”. I can just select remove”
  + Removes from tray… Back to name search… Adds Harvard
  + **It would have been nice if I wouldn’t have been able to select compare and there was a message that said “you can only select 2 or 3 schools”**
  + Rankings aren’t there but that’d be something I’d look at. Would look at costs.
  + Notices that the tuition amounts are different than last time.
  + Notes that Harvard pays a little higher for housing. Would like to go to the profile to find out how Harvard pays out benefits.
  + ARE BENEFITS ACCURATE… Yeah, I think so. Knows GI Bill pays to school is pro-rated to %. If there was a way… maybe at the top… to modify it to your benefit level… I’m very meticulous, I’d probably call the school (I did that). It’d be cool if the contact info for the military office was available. “My dad had 60%, the numbers wouldn’t stack out like this.”

**Upon task completion:**

* 1 is very easy and 5 is very hard, what did you think of adding Harvard Law School to your school comparison? 2 – I’m surprised by how easy. Because I had already had 3 to compare, it was a little confusing to figure out why I couldn’t select the comparison.” It could be confusing for people who are older, like 25. =)