Participant: Kevin

Date: 06/16/2021 @ 10:20 am

Note:

**Conversation Guide Template for GI Bill Comparison Tool Compare Functionality**

**Moderator logistics**

*Use*[*#feedback-backchannel*](https://dsva.slack.com/messages/C40B45NJK/details/)*in Slack for real-time feedback from observers.*

*Mute your Slack notifications*

*Before the session, send out the*[*observer instructions*](https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/va.gov-team/blob/master/platform/research/during-research/howto-observer-instructions.md)*to your observers (Slackbot will do this for you if you type "observer instructions" into*[*#feedback-backchannel*](https://dsva.slack.com/channels/feedback-backchannel)*).*

*In the Attendees section, make sure everyone except the participant is on mute.*

*In the Audio section, click the drop-down arrow and make sure "Play Entry/Exit Chimes" is unchecked*

*Check your [screensharing setup] and share permissions for participants.*

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

**Intro - 5 minutes**

Thanks for joining us today! My name is Jen and I also have some colleagues on the line observing and taking notes. Today we're going to talk about looking for schools on the GI Bill 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 APPROPRIATE:] **You'll be interacting with a prototypes and a demo tool.** This is a demo tool that may not function exactly the way you expect. Some areas of the prototype will be clickable, and some will not. Since it's a demo, none of your actions will affect your actual VA information or benefits.
* **If for any reason and at any time you want to stop the session, please let me know.**
* **Are you comfortable if I record my screen and 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**

Before we look at the website, let’s start with a few warm-up questions.

* What is your military status (e.g. Veteran, child, spouse)?
  + If Veteran, which branch of service?  
    *Veteran / Navy*
* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits?  
  *Post 9/11 and currently using VRE right now.*
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - When did you start school?  
      *uhh… I have been on the VRE for about 4 or 5 months and I did post 9/11 a few years ago…  
      Im at a different school now than I was when I did the post 9/11*
  + If no, do you plan on using your benefits in the near future?
    - Which benefit? Where are you in the school selection process?
* When you first decided to go back to school, what factors were important to you in picking school options?  
  *The biggest thing for me was finding something that complimented my work schedule. This time around I wasn’t working so it was just about finding something that was close to me and accredited so that once I do get my degree I don’t have any issues with what ive already obtained.  
    
  I am studying business administrative management with a focus in management  
    
  I was considering centura college but the location… if we could have gotten both (his wife and him) of us into the same school that would have been great.* 
  + Do you remember any of the schools you were considering?
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?
  + If yes, what did you use it for?

**First Task: Finding schools - 5 minutes**

* Let's travel back in time and say you found the GI Bill Comparison Tool when you were first exploring schools. Could you show me how you'd use the Comparison Tool to learn about schools you might be interested in attending?  
    
  *user types in zip code, hits search, adjusts radus from 50 miles to 25 miles and hits search again… and that was pretty much what I did. I wanted to look by location first and then click through the different schools and understand what they offer and hten look at their sites as well… at the time I wasn’t really sure what program I wanted to go into so… I had one friend who was in school and we both served in the military together and I wasn’t really sure how any of it worked so it helped me understand how to stretch my benefits, did they cover books? How much do they cover in books? Some schools were offering more for books than others… so it was really helpful.*   
    
  *Um I wanted something that… at that time I wasn’t sure I would stay in virginia so if they have other locations that I could move and still continue that program. So I looked at that as well… that was hugely important to me… so I could potentially continue on if I could do it online capacity that I could do that as well.*Tell me about the results your seeing here *Uh it looks like they are just giving the information as far as what school… um and this is something I looked at a lot.. the ‘update tuition and housing estimates’ because I wanted to make sure I was seeing the right stuff and then being offered that information I would know what to say when I went to the school because ive seen veterans who didn’t know how it worked that they were getting duked a little bit.   
    
  its about getting my education and getting the most benefit out of the bill  
    
  Yes. (thinks the benefits are now accurate to his situation)*Can we get your feedback on the search result cards here? *uh the school rating was important to me… I actually the school I choose was highly rated but when I went more than 75% of the people in my classes were using post 9/11 GI bill so that’s important to me to see that they have a good reputation with other veterans… and the you may be eligible for up to and the housing… (clicks open and close cautionary warning) oh and this one says 1 cautionary warning and this says they have an accreditation issue well that would have been hugely important to me because I want to be able to transfer my credits or have a degree that stood on its own if you will.   
    
  Yeah so I looked at all of that whether or not it was a regional as far as accreditation is concerned so I could make sure to take advantage of that particular opportunity.   
    
  I think this went pretty well… like (in the past) there were only 2 instances where I had to call and then after that it was easy to understand. There were some schools where the eligibility and housing was showing me something different for 2 or 3 schools but I just picked up the phone and called them and then they explained and also refereed me to the schools to explain why it was covered that way. I inittionally went to strayer the tution books and everything is separated but at itt tech books are included in tutition so I didn’t understand why. I just figured it would all be the same.   
    
  I would rate this a 2. Once I got familiar it was a 1 all the way…*

**Things to watch for:**

* What type(s) of search does the user conduct?
* Does the user notice the Compare checkbox?

**Upon task completion:**

* How do you think that went?
* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very easy and 5 is very hard, what did you think of finding schools on the Comparison Tool?
* Can you talk to me about the school cards you see here?
* For the benefit estimates you see here, do you believe these are accurate for your situation?

**Second Task: Comparing schools - 20 minutes**

* Let's say you want to get a better idea of the differences between the schools you're considering. How would you use the Comparison Tool to determine which school would be the best option for you?  
    
  (User selects three schools to compare in the search by location… and opens the drawer at the bottom of the page and clicks compare and is taken to the compare page)   
    
  What do you think of what your seeing here?  
  *user starts scrolling… im seeing some really good information. I don’t remember it talking about the size of the school but that’s important for me if I would go back to school. With covid in place I like the fact that we have smaller classes because that was challenging for me the first time, in large classes everything moves a lot faster. Now, at 40, I don’t need it to move too fast. Looking at the information here I see there is a book stipend for each of these schools and the housing allowance is different for each of these schools and I see its almost a $200 difference so that’s important. Uh the school ratings and the education ratings that would have been huge as well. I want to know they have a good reputation in that community overall.. and I do like this one, veteran friendliness… had I done more research on ITT Tech, I would not have gone there, They are not veteran friendly at all… the cautionary information that would have been important, if there is anything to cause concern I don’t want anything unexpected. Complaints are important but you know some are valid some are not. Going to strayer, there was one thing (military training) that they did not take that every other school I went to took, so that was interesting.   
    
  Clicks highlight differences… one of the biggest things I didn’t notice with student veteran groups is one said no and two said yes, I missed that before… student complaints, I may have scrolled too quickly and missed that but the highlight differences will highlight that and point that out which is pretty good… I like that.   
    
  I see zero for out of pocket tuition that’s good, that’s something I would have looked at. I mean outside of that everything else… those were the ones that were most hiugely important to me. The length of the program is another thing I would have looked at.*

**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?
* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very easy and 5 is very hard, what did you think of comparing schools on the Comparison Tool?
* Looking at the compare page, what do you think of the information you see here? Which ones are most important to you? Is anything missing that would be important to you?
* What do you think of the process of comparing schools?
* What do you think of the "Highlight differences" functionality? Is it useful?

**Third Task: YAY Harvard! - 5 minutes**

* You found out that you were accepted into **Harvard**. Even if you don't end up going, you're curious about how **Harvard** stacks up against some of the other schools on your short list. How would you use the Comparison Tool to see how **Harvard** compared to some of your other school options?  
    
  User removes a school from the compare tray and conducts a new search while the tray is open for ‘harvard university’ and scrolls down the page to select compare. Immediately on landing on the page he selects highlight differences…  
    
  Credit for military training it wont make a huge dent in a degree but that would have been something for me to consider.

**Things to watch for:**

* *If applicable,* can the user easily remove schools from the comparison?
* Where does the user go to remove schools (compare tray, compare page, search results)?

**Upon task completion:**

* How do you think that went?
* On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very easy and 5 is very hard, what did you think of adding Harvard Law School to your school comparison?  
  *uh 1.*
* General thoughts?  
  Um its very easy to use and easy to understand… um the highlight differences I actually love that button, it gives you an idea of what youre going in instead of having to be meticulous and look line by line, it kind of does it for you.

**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)