Participant: Mikaela

Date: 06/18/2021 @ 09:00 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)?  
  I am a dependant of an army veteran
  + If Veteran, which branch of service?
* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits?  
  I have used it in the past. Chapter 35 dependents educational assistance  
  my first year of school was 2018 for political science.
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - When did you start school?
  + 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?  
  affordability, what school I could go to and take the least loans. I knew I would have to take loans but I wanted to minimize them. I also wanted to go to a school with prestige… are you referring to my future school or my past school because I’m about to go for my masters now. For both schools it was 100% affordability then. It was ‘is this school recognizable that I can get a good job after?’ And then it was location and ratings…   
    
  when I was first looking at schools I just googled the school and found sites that rated the schools like college niche and college rater… you know sites that give students an opportunity to rank their school.   
    
  I considered GW which is where I currently go and am going to continue to go. I wanted to study in DC so I looked at Georgetown, American, catholic, and a university in Baltimore, and that was it! I didn’t apply to that many colleges.
  + Do you remember any of the schools you were considering?
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?  
  I may have
  + If yes, what did you use it for?
* Initial thoughts or questions?  
  no I think im good.. Okay I see at the top education and training… so im guessing when people are looking up education and training they can access this? I just remember when I was looking for this with my dad we were having a hard time trying to find it.

**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?  
    
  yeah so since I was motivated to stay in DC I would probably select search by location and type in distract of Colombia and select the prefill and lessen it to 25 miles if that’s an option and select search and go from there.  
    
  okay so im seeing a map with results on the side um… im guessing the letters represent the initials of the schools id probably start to zoom in closer since this is giving a lot of maraylnd and virginia and then id probably like… if you click on a letter what happens? Lets click on the I… I think that’s GW… okay so id probably click on a few of them to see whats the different options. I’m imagining if im 18 years old id click around to get the different names… Id probably stay in the downtown DC area… maybe click on B? so I have a question… when you select B does it automatically scroll to the listing on the left or are you manually scrolling to find it? Okay so then I would probably select K and see. Okay L… M… and T… Okay…  
    
  Im not looking for anything yet I guess when I’m clicking around the first thing I’m looking at is name recognition so now id probably go back to the ones I recognize… in this case GW and Georgetown… so lets go back to ‘I’ okay one thing I’m conscious of is school ranking thinking of the lens of a 18 year old id see what does GW vs Georgetown rank…. If it has a school ranking that would be pretty cool.  
    
  So again I think school rating would be cool… if you click on the GWU does it take you to the website? I would like it to take us to the GWU website… Oh interesting… this isn’t what I was expecting but no, this makes sense that this is what would populate… okay this is pretty convenient…. Okay so it gives the entire tuition and fees and book stipend.  
    
  Does the GI Bill tool mention the yellow ribbon program at all? I would expect it too because I personally know that GW has a really good matching program.   
    
  I would expect that to appear maybe under the additional resources (at the top of the profile page) I don’t know how well people know the yellow ribbon program… Im just speaking from the folks I tlak to at GW the yellow ribbon program and how much they match is one of the reasons they went to GW so like making it so it was kinda easy to access so like under the title GWU or with the qualities private school city locale medium size… yellow ribbon eligible something like that.

**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?  
  I think it went well for me because I had a location I wanted to go to… im thinking kind of like my dad whos 50 it might be nice to have popular locations or something? Where there are a lot of universities or something… okay if I do search by name and type in American university will it also show me schools like American university.  
    
  Okay… (look at search results) I guess what I would do since im only interested in the one in the US id select American university and then google schools like American since I don’t see that option here.
* 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?  
  I would say like a… maybe the search by name is a 2 and search by location is a 1.
* 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?  
    
  Id go back to search by location bc I like dc and I like that it saved my previous search here.. okay what happens if I select I.. okay theres that compare button so id probably select that and then I think P was Georgetown so I would select P and click compare again… and then I think american was AR at the top left…. Hmm actually lets zoom in a little more AQ.. and compare… alright so I really like that compare institutions bar at the bottom, that’s something ive been looking at this entire time so id select that two to 3 institutions okay so I would select compare… okay it takes you to a new page… So id probably scroll down and see the housing allowance and book stipend, it makes sense they are all the same because they are in dc. The first thing that jumps out at me is there are no school ratings… it would be cool to be taken to niche or something like that since they aren’t rated yet.   
    
  I really like that there are other veteran programs… especially military assistance, tuitions…. Can you start slowly scrolling back up? Yeah if we had rankings that would be really cool… okay cool and GI bill students, so that is at the top… so that isn’t as much a consideration for me since I didn’t serve or anything but knowing that one school had more military students I would probably like that more. That would proably be more important for someone like my dad whos a veteran.

**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?  
  I thought that went really well… I like this platform… I like that theres a lot of information… I especially like the other programs at the bottom. Um. I think what would be cool is if there was a comparison with a medium school like compare GI Bill students to the average GI bill students. Okay andim just curious if I select back does it remember the search you looked up? Okay it does, im really glad it does that.
* 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?  
  I thought it was a 1 for me.
* 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?  
    
  oo okay so I would probably just go to search by name then and lets say Georgetown and American are my top schools. So lets clear American and type Harvard and select when it auto populates and click search. And then I would select compare for Harvard university okay so I think its not letting us click it because we can only compare 3 so lets go back to search by location and unselect or wait if I click compare institutions what happens… oh okay so lets say I don’t like GW I would click remove and remove again…. Okay now I would go to the search by name tab and select compare for Harvard. Okay so then I would click compare… I don’t know how difficult it would be to program but the button said you can only select two or 3 schools like an error because I might be confused why I cant select compare for someone who is not tech savvy.   
    
  Okay so I would look at rankings if it was there but then I would look at costs like how much is paid to you… so hmm I might be crazy but are the payments made to school different than before… I swear American said 13,000 before. Okay my comment on the tuition … if I looked at Harvard I would like to know how that pays out the tuition and fees.   
    
  if there was a way to quickly flag why I couldn’t select compare like a quick message box explaining why I could only select up to 3?

**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?

**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)