Participant: Melinda

Date: 06/18/2021 @ 02:15 pm

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 spouse and caregiver for a 100% disabled veteran
  + If Veteran, which branch of service?  
    um that’s a complicated question, his last branch was the army but he was also in the navy and national guard and …reserve
* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits?  
  yes im getting my doctorate in \_\_\_ and I use chapter 35 benefits.
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - When did you start school?  
      in January 2019
  + 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?  
  um for me it was easy I went where the scholarship money was.
  + Do you remember any of the schools you were considering?
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before?  
  no.
  + If yes, what did you use it for?
* Initial thoughts  
  no im interested to see what it does, I have 3 kids going to college and they need to know how to use 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?  
  clicks search by name input box and types in Colorado and clicks the drop down for Colorado technical university online.  
    
  its uh… the basic information but it gives tuition information, housing benefit information which im confused why it says that for an online school and the regional information… I’m not sure what the cautionary information means so im not sure if I click on that… oh there it goes… but I’m still curious what this warning means so I would probably want to research that online. I see this warning is also on the school its connected to so that kind of information is useful. I would look up more schools and keep a list…. User clicks on comparison drawer to open. I see it has a comparison thing here, so I’m seeing how to work. I don’t know how I get the school names into the box to compare them.   
    
  looking at the box here how would you add a school to the comparison?  
  It doesn’t really give me any indication, maybe if I refine my search I can add schools that way? But that doesn’t look like it will be helpful by the looks of it. I’m not sure how I would get other schools in there. I would expect to click and drag or have a ‘click here to add more schools’ now I’m not sure what this green thing means, employer that they employ some people from that school? But I wouldn’t be going into anything were the police department would be hiring me so im confused what that means… interesting that all of these schools have warnings on them so I don’t if   
    
  im wondering if I hit compare if that… ah yes now I understand if I hit compare it will add it to the compare institutions drawer. (searches previous school, adds to comparison and clicks compare) Okay I don’t know what large or medium is… how big is that? It doesn’t really tell me like whats offered at the schools… um I see it says estimated benefits… I am interested in that… I want to know what they are willing to do for me that’s nice.   
    
  uh money is always important so im always looking at amount of money out of pocket and housing and books… school ratings are kinda important but I don’t know what are those based on? Is it how easy it is to work with the va for this school to get your benefits? That would be helpful  
    
  I clicked highlight differences. I see it highlights the things that are different but I don’t know that’s all that helpful.   
    
  I think it was an okay system to be honest… it wasn’t that helpful I had a hard time understanding how to actually use the system. Id be concerned about the time I wasted to figure out and I think a lot of these things lead me to more questions.

**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?

**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?  
    
  looks up Harvard add to compare box and click compare… and when I look at it I can highlight the differences now that I know after playing with this for a few minutes… and im able to see the big difffences… which ofcourse is interesting. Im wondering now um like it says tuition and fees

**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?  
  I would rate it a 1 it was a little easier… do you want me to take Harvard out? Okay clicks remove… um I don’t see a click to start over but I see I can remove them all…. Um  
    
  …
* Are these numbers correct for your situation?  
  I don’t think they are because im in a masters program but it doesn’t say anywhere on here how these prices are. I think I would expect to update these numbers it would be difficult to make a decision without that.

**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)