**Discussion Guide for CT Redesign for Search, Compare and Initial Profile Page**

**P3 - Aiku**

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

**Intro - 5 minutes**

Thanks for joining us today! My name is Amy and I also have some colleagues on the line observing and taking notes. Today we're going to talk about searching and comparing 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.
* **You'll be interacting with a prototype 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.

* Are you currently using or have you ever used your education benefits? Yes, I’ve used two separate ones and in the process of about to use another one. I started off using MGIB and after a year, I switched to Post 9/11 and used for 24 months. Now I’m working with VRC for Voc Rehab and plan to use Chapter 31 in the Fall if not before.
  + If yes, which benefit are you using?
    - When did you start school? Where did you go?
  + If no, do you plan on using your benefits in the near future?
    - Which benefit?
    - Where are you in the school selection process? I’ll be attending Temple University. (Have already picked out school)
* When you were first looking for schools, how did you go about finding potential options? What was important to you?
* So I did regular Google searches – I figured out what I wanted to major in first and then I narrowed it down by what was close to me. Then I also went to the VA website to see if it was an approved school to see what would be covered. Yeah, I think that’s about it.
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? Yes, I’ve used it quite a few times.
  + If yes, what did you use it for?

**Initial Take - 5 minutes**

This is the GI Bill Comparison Tool, which allows you to see the benefits you can receive at various schools. Can you tell me what your initial thoughts are when you see this page? What do you think you can do here?

So what I’m seeing is a search tool and it looks like I could search for school by name of school. Maybe that’s optional. Maybe by city, state and then choose the radius. I see I could also search for employers like apprenticeships. And VET TEC – I think that’s the one where you can learn more technical knowledge like programming. Benefit Estimates – not too sure what that would be. Maybe how much GI Bill you get like 40% or 100%. School preferences maybe that would be private/public, vocational. And degrees/majors whatever you’re interested in business, science, whatever. It looks like at least one thing has to be filled out. Oh okay I see that those on the bottom are refining it.

**First Task: Radius from Location - 10 minutes**

* Let's say you aren't sure what you want to major in, but you're moving to **Daytona, Florida** and want to find a school within 10 miles of your location because you don't want a long commute. How would you use the Comparison Tool to find schools that are within that driving distance?
* I’d put the location…clicked location. Selected Daytona. Clicked radius. Then I would adjust the miles..and I’m not sure what I would want to major in. Wanted to open Your Benefit Estimates…if I knew I wanted to go to public/private (school preferences) and then click Search. These estimates are based on Veterans, Chapter 33…at least one class in-person. With this (scrolling through options), I would first look at…hmmm…I guess for me, with college and everything. I would care more about tuition. With these I see that it’s not all covered (with numbers), but Daytona is since 100% instate…But lots of GI Bill students and good ratings…I think my first pick I would by to check this out. I see there’s a Comparison…I would probably learn more before comparing. I would click View details to see what’s offered. If I had more questions I would go that school’s website to do more searching. If I had more questions, I’d do YouTube or Reddit searches to see what student experiences were like.
* Impression of nationally, regional accreditation? I am slightly…as long as its accredited, I’m not too picky. From what I researched, it can matter with certain programs….where its being accredited by an organization. When it comes to regional schools they may have more of a positive reputation in that area as opposed to National accreditation which is more states and cities. I don’t really care if its national or regional, but I do care that is accredited. I don’t know what the Hybrid accreditation is – I’d be skeptical of that.
* Jen: 2
* User: That was fine. I was a little confused. I would wonder if Daytona Beach is Florida…and I don’t know if these beaches are within 10 miles of each other. I think I would have liked to see…there’s not really the mileage. Maybe this one is 7 miles and this one is 5 miles. Since that was part of the search criteria.
* User rating: As far as inputting everything that was easy. Because I’m not aware of the area, knowing the distance is not as easy…so that was maybe a 2 or 3, but putting in info was a 1.
* Search results sorted? I don’t know…because its not alphabetical. It seems like they all have same number of students, ratings…the same rating. Yeah, I have no idea. Maybe….nope. I would think that Daytona Beach schools would be closer to Daytona Beach so I can’t even tell if its by distance because it starts by Ormond Beach and ends in Holly Beach.
* How would you expect? I would expect to be sorted by distance. With first being the closest and last being the farthest from Daytona.

**Things to watch for:**

* Where does the user look to enter the search criteria?
* Do they click the search fields?
* What dropdowns (if any) do they open?
* What location format do users say they would input?

**Upon task completion:**

* How did 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 by distance from location?
* Looking at the benefits for these schools, let's say someone had only served in the military for 2 years. Do you think these numbers accurately represent the benefits they would receive?
* Since I see that you have 36 or more months, I don’t think that would be accurate. I would click View details to see if there’s anything else you can do. Or maybe that’s what the benefit estimate does? Oh, it’s working now! And I would click 36 months – I would change that to 24 months.  
  - If not, how would they go about determining what benefits they would receive?
* How do you think the school search results were sorted?
* Was there any other information you were expecting to see?

**Things to watch for:**

* How does the user try to get back to the home page?

**Second Task: Degree / Program Search - 10 minutes**

* Let's say you've recently heard of someone who received a Bachelor's in **Citizenship Activities**. You don't know of any schools that offer this program, but are curious about what the program would be about. How would you use the Comparison Tool to see if any schools covered by the GI Bill offer this as a program of study?
* So I would put in my location and then my radius and then I would do the refine part and choose the major. And since I can search for it, I can do that. (No level of degree)…okay, so I see that I don’t even need to do the location. So the way I would go about it is I would go by location…if not, then I would choose other places. I wouldn’t have thought I could search by refine. I would have thought I would have had to have looked by name of school or location.
* Talk more about that? I think its because it says Refine search that I’m imagining it as a filter. You put in the main information – the location or school – and narrow it down from there. To go by refining it doesn’t seem intuitive to me. It seems I would need something bigger before going to something smaller.

*Prompt* You see that **Indiana University-Bloomington** is highly rated by Veterans. If you wanted to ask a few questions about the school, how would you use the Comparison Tool to find out who to talk to?

I’d go to View details. And let’s see…I would read this top (institution summary). I see the website is here, but I wouldn’t click it. I would click Contact details. (did so). So maybe her (SCO)…her title seems kind of high up…I don’t know if I would go to her. I might go to the website and go to contact information on admissions office.

Thought when clicked Contact details? I would prefer if a bubble pops up with a contact. I mean I click it right and it takes me to the bottom of the page. I know a lot of pages have a button to jump to the top of the page. I think I would rather see if pop up or have something up here already (top of page). Usually contact details would be at the bottom. I think I would prefer to see a bubble pop up so I can keep scrolling down to see benefits.

Jen: 2

User: It was easier than I expected. I would say a 1.

Return to search results? Hits the back button (Tried GI bill link?)

*Prompt* Where would you go to see how much tuition would be covered at **Indiana University-Bloomington**?

**Things to watch for:**

Part 1

* Where does the user look to enter the field of study?
* Do they click the search fields?
* What dropdowns (if any) do they open?
* Do they open the "Level of degree" dropdown?

Part 2

* Does the user click any of the jumplinks or just scroll?

**Upon task completion:**

* How did 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 by program of study?
* What do you think of the school cards?
* How do you think the school search results were sorted? (Why were some schools higher or lower on the list?)
* Was there any other information you were expecting to see?

**Third Task: Compare Schools - 15 minutes**

Looking at these search results, let's say you're interested in **University of Massachusetts-Amherst** and **Indiana University-Bloomington**. How would you go about comparing these two schools to see which school would be a better fit for you?

I would start with clicking Compare boxes…Clicked both compare checkboxes. And click Compare schools on page. And now I have the side by side view and I’d look at things like how long the program is and the size even though these are the same so it’s not really different. The region doesn’t matter to me, but I know it matters to some people. I would look at the benefits to see what is covered, especially the out of pocket information…and I see that it’s zero. And I would look at the housing allowance – especially if I’m living somewhere with more rent, which one would be more suited for me.

So I’m guessing extensions are other campuses you can attend. I would probably Google those to see what those are. What I’m seeing is this is the main campus and this is other places you can go.

Oh, I like how it has the Veteran programs. The sites can be vague, so it’s nice to see if all laid out and the color coding. I also appreciate the cautionary warning. I know that’s something on the other GI Bill tool because you don’t want to get screwed or anything. I would be concerned about the complaints even if I don’t know if only 1 would deter me. So it seems like this is following my mind…the flow of my mind is following the flow of the website. It’s like I have these questions and the answer pops up next. Since I did it that way I would go and see on the website, which majors are offered because I don’t see anything on majors here. Maybe umm…maybe their top majors on here. Having those listed.

*Prompt* After looking at these two schools, **University of Massachusetts-Amherst** doesn't look like a good option for you. How would you remove that school from the comparison and add another in its place?

Tried to click Compare carrot…first I would check to see if I can click that. Clicked Return to search results. Uncheck on Compare tray. Clicked Emory on page. Clicked Compare schools again…and pretty much go through the process again.

User: 2 – sometimes when you’re on Comparison tool and have a suggested option instead of having to go all the way back to the search results options. It wasn’t like I had to go back and do things all over again.

Jen: 2

You said you would want to learn more before comparing, what info would you be looking for? The major. If it doesn’t have my major, I’m not interested. I think it does have tuition and stuff listed – what’s the tuition, how much is covered, if Yellow Ribbon program approved.

Yellow Ribbon – I think maybe if it had a Yellow ribbon next to it (in the cards). So I see the 100% instate isn’t needed. But for those with numbers, have a cute little ribbon right next to it.

Number of schools? Max 5, but given the amount of information on this page. Five might be a bit much. So 3 to 5 would be a good number.

Any really important info you aren’t seeing? The only thing is not being able to see the majors…like the top 3 majors you get a vibe for what the school is like. I would have to kind of delve into that because I think that’s important for a lot of students

Any info not important? No I think everything was helpful

**Things to watch for:**

* Is the user able to successfully add schools to the gutter to compare?
* Is the user able to navigate successfully to the Compare page?
* How does the user try and navigate back to the search results?

**Upon task completion:**

* How did 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?
* How many schools would you want to be able to compare at one time?
* What information is important for you to see when comparing schools?
* Was there any other information you were expecting to see on the Compare page?
* Was there any information you didn't think was necessary?
* What did you think of the general layout of the page?

**Post-Task Interview - X minutes**

* Any questions for me?

**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!