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

**P4 - Erin**

*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? Currently using it. The 9/11 GI Bill. September 2020. It’s an extension program because I wasn’t sure…it’s a certificate program through a college extension for now. It’s got its moments
  + 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?
* When you were first looking for schools, how did you go about finding potential options? What was important to you? Well I know I wanted to start studying…my original degree is in Oceanography but I don’t foresee myself working on it. So I chose Accounting for moving forward in our lives, but I’m always late looking at due dates and stuff for Masters programs in San Diego…that’s more what I was looking to study.
* Important – what they had available, what was close to my house, if they had any in-person which they don’t. It was really hard to find out if they were inperson. Things aren’t open with coronavirus. I’m being penalized by not going (by not being able to go in person). Maybe it’s the program – I didn’t know that it was online and not physically attending. I started looking in August and started in September.
* Have you ever used the GI Bill Comparison Tool before? I did just looking because we are possibly relocating to a different state so I was looking to see what was available. So looking also for here because there’s like 3 colleges here.
  + 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?

Fairly easy I mean – straight to the point, if I know the name of the school I can put it in. I haven’t played with it yet so I don’t know what would come up. That would be cool if I was moving somewhere. I could put the city name for places where I’m going since I won’t know schools in those cities. So if I was going to Austin, TX, I wouldn’t know the schools in the area, but I could put that in and see what’s there.

**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?
* Clicked location, selected Daytona…so location pops up and if it doesn’t pop up, then I’d type it out. So I started typing Daytona and it popped up. So I changed the range to 10 miles. I don’t know if you can add in ranges yourself. That might be helpful for people who want to go farther out. I’d actually want to be like 5 miles out because I’m lazy. So yeah, that was pretty easy. Hit search. There we go. All the schools showed up and it told me how many there were so I could see all the schools available. And that they’re different kinds of schools. And that they’re accredited – that’s always good and that those are the ones that pop up. The only one I don’t see are community colleges if those are incorporated here.
* How might you try and find those? I’m not sure…Opened school preferences..I’d unclick the 4 year and just do 2. Year. I don’t know what the warnings and closings are. I would have to learn more because I don’t know what that means. I don’t know if those are schools that have been warned by the VA…I don’t know I’d have to read the Learn more to see more.
* Right now they aren’t part of it, so they shouldn’t show because it’s checked to exclude them. Preference? It depends – if I was looking for a particular school and it didn’t come up…so I’d have to learn more. It is good to know which ones to stay away from. Like one of the for profit schools that’s nationwide, I don’t want to consider it.
* User: Went well – I can easily type my city/state in and can choose distances that are commutable. It gave me the 2 year results too…so there are no community colleges in that range. I usually measure things by minutes and not distance. 1.
* Jen: 2

**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?
  + For this choice, it’s telling you it’s the 100% benefit since its 36 months. Opened Benefit Estimates…I think I can adjust the percentage to less if I didn’t serve the whole time.  
    - 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?
  + I don’t know if it would be important to have the information for the VA contact person…I mean, I see the view details, but I don’t know what’s there. I know with Veterans they just want to see the money. I do like seeing how many GI Bill students have attended there. If the contact was later on, that would be fine. Get a conversation started with a VA rep at the school.

**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?
* I’d probably check out the degrees/majors. I’m trying to click on it to see if it will drop down. I see level of degree All..changed to Bachelor’s. And type in Citizenship and there’s a dropdown with options…so everything in here. Clicked Citizenship Activities and clicked Apply. Three colleges from different parts of the country showed up.
* User: That was good…a very specific kind of degree and it’s nice to be able to pull it out. I know for Oceanography, it would be nice to see what other schools show up that have it. I like it.
* Jen: 2

*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 don’t know what view details has…I see it has ratings by other Veterans. More than likely I would go in to see if I can find a contact for a student veteran center. I would look everywhere…with this tool, I would probably start with ratings by Veterans or if they have contact information. Or open view details to see what’s there. Clicked view details. Scrolled down a bit…so it has more info on benefits, how much per term, institution details of what other Veteran programs at this school, Fields of study, location, cautionary information, complaints, ratings, and has contact details for the certifying officials…my computer is so slow I’m sorry. Scrolling back up. Fields of study and tuition policy.

Amy prompted…yeah, I’m looking, it’s not popping out at me. I know they had the Veteran contact as far as the admin side, but I’m not….

Amy prompt return to SRP: Hopefully I can just hit Back.

*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?

Clicked Indiana compare, scrolled down and clicked compare for UMass. And it comes up with Compare schools. And then I guess View details for both? Clicked view details for Indiana…so I’m assuming the Indiana one showed up first…and I’m scrolling down looking…and there’s a compare button, I don’t know. Amy prompted – what would it do? I don’t know, that Amherst would open and I could do a side by side of the information. It’s a lot of clicking and a lot of different stuff. I don’t know if you could do a side by side of everything. I like this at the top where I can jump to the different sections. Yeah, it would be nice to see if they were sitting next to one another

Amy prompted to go back to SRP: Clicked Back button.

User clicked Compare schools…it’s showing me something…oh so I just needed to click the Compare button instead of View details for one school. It’s the same information. It’s given me what I want – is it accredited, how much my benefit would be for each school. Give me the ratings side by side. School info side by side what other Veteran programs are supported at the campus. It gives me a comparison that way. I like it.

User: 1 or 2, it’s really going to depend on computer using…I’m using an older one. I think most people will have better internet connection when they’re looking. I like playing with things. Initially, I don’t know what it does because I haven’t seen it before. But it will be easy to use.

Others will do it on the phone, but I can’t because it’s too small.

Jen: 1

How are schools sorted on SRP? I don’t know – you know I’m not entirely sure. Random. If there’s a sorting way I wouldn’t see it. It just gave me the 3 schools. If more, my guess would be closest to where I am and it just goes outward from there – whatever I put in.

*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?

**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!