#### **SCO STEM Discussion Script**

### Introduction

Thanks for joining us today! My name is [NAME]. I also have two colleagues on the line, <Name> & <Name>. They’ll be taking notes to ensure that we capture your feedback accurately.

As you’ve heard, we are working with a team at the VA that will be launching the new Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship program in August. We’re interested in speaking with you today to get your feedback on the scholarship application process.

The scholarship provides up to 9 months of additional Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to qualifying Veterans and Fry Scholars who are seeking an undergraduate STEM degree, or those who have already earned a STEM degree and now want to obtain a teaching certificate.

The team is in the process of designing an online application form that Veterans can use to apply for the scholarship and we’d like to hear your idea to be sure the form is designed in a thoughtful way.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

**Recording**

We generally record our sessions, in case we need to confirm that we’ve captured people’s opinions accurately. **Are you comfortable if I record the audio as we talk today?**

* Great, I’m going to go ahead and start the recording.
* **Once it’s on, I’ll ask you if it’s okay one more time, as we like to have your verbal consent**. [Only if we use our WebEx] There will be a slight pause, then we’ll hear an announcement that the recording has started.

[Start recording]

* **Are you comfortable if I record the audio as we talk today?**

**STEM Scholarship Overview**

Great, first we’ll share a link to the STEM Scholarship program description page on VA.gov. This will give you a little more background on the program.

<https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/fgib/stem.asp>

As you read through the description, we are interested in hearing any thoughts or questions you may have, or any thoughts or questions you think Veterans may have.

P2: So this will be on the main VA website, like on the main page? When we help students inquiring about the application, we just tell them to go down to va.gov, then education and training? [T could not navigate to it from the education and training page].

P2: That’s going to be the tricky part. What are they going to ask, “Hey Google?”

T: Do you have STEM people exhausting their benefits? P2: Yeah, constantly, but we can’t give them any information because we haven’t gotten any from the VA.

P3: Would they have to indicate upfront what major they are?

P2: It’s a little unclear, and you have to remember we’re dealing with non-traditional students, they don’t really know some of the words we use here in higher education, you might want to define what a post-secondary degree is. I would say, “bachelor’s”, a “master’s degree” or anything like that. I would suggest you write it out.

P3: Also including the definition of STEM. Is there going to be any clarification on what type of programs students can apply for before they do so? They would probably have to applied, and be denied, is that correct? The last thing we want to do is provide the students false hope. Because of the roll out period, there may be some delay, so I want to provide them with the best information possible.

**Program Questions**

1. What questions come to mind as you read about the program?

P2: What’s the turnaround time? What’s a more realistic turnaround time for the processing of these applications?

1. What questions do you anticipate that Veterans will have?
2. Do you have any questions about the eligibility requirements?
3. Are some of the undergraduate STEM degree programs at   
   \_\_\_\_\_\_School Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 128 credit hours or more?
4. Do you have any questions about the benefits Veterans will receive?
5. Do you have any thoughts on the way the information is presented?
6. Do you have any impression of the frequency with which students go on to obtain a teaching certificate after they graduate from a STEM program?

P2: They use them at a community college or while they’re active duty. There’s a whole slew of reasons why people use up their benefits early.

P3: There’s a host of requirements that may delay in students completing their STEM coursework. It does have a significant impact on some students.

**Draft STEM Application Form**

Now, we’d like to take a look at an early draft of the application. A decision has been made to place the form online, so this paper form will NOT actually be used. However, it contains some questions that may be asked, so we thought it might be useful to share.

[Display Draft STEM Application v.3.0 in WebEx, rather than sending via email.]

P2: Underneath important information, I suggest you put in information about the Fry Scholarship recipients since they are involved, as well.

P2: The fiscal year, just to get you guys prepared, everybody’s going to have a lot of questions just because that’s in the middle of a semester for most traditional schools. SCOs would need to make sure that they apply for both fiscal years. If they apply for one fiscal year 2019, and then FY 2020 begins, do they get grandfathered into that new year or do they just run out of benefits?

P2: with the CIP code, are those provided by VA or are they endorsed by DOE (Dept of Education)?

P3: I’m assuming this document would have to be a fillable pdf, correct?

P2: You’d probably want to define what a veteran is because of question 9. If you just select NO right off the bat, the VA’s definition of what a veteran is would be helpful. That wouldn’t be applicable to Fry Scholars at all. I would suggest putting an N/A box for that. Under question 10, I would put in there somewhere where they can check their benefits. A lot of time students don’t even know how much time remaining they have left. If you could redirect them to a link that they can pull up their eBenefits account, or you could say go to your eBenefits account. If you ask this question without a lot of hand holding, you’re going to get a lot that are incomplete.

P2: PART II is to be completed by the student still, correct? This may cause a lot of confusion due to the number of questions. A lot of students don’t really know if the teaching credentials that they’re wanting to get to would be applicable to that STEM. It would go back to the CIP code thing. I believe the CIP code for DOE for teaching certification is one whole thing, and not one that falls under a STEM field. I would suggest you try finding a SCO that falls under a school’s registrar’s office since they deal specifically with CIP codes.

P3: Is a portion of Part II students having to provide some kind of document for verifying the information they’ve listed?

P2: I guess for the section that does ened to be filled out by SCOs, depending on the information needed, it may not pertain to a SCO. We’re unique in that we’re able to verify everything. If you were to go to any other university, it may not be that. They may only certify student benefits, and they may not be able to verify other information. That may be someone in the school’s registrar’s office, and they don’t fall under that category.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

1. What question do you think Veterans would have as they complete the application process?
2. What questions on the form, if any, need more explanation or clarification?

**Overall Application Process**

1. What do you think about the overall process of applying for a STEM Scholarship?
2. What parts of the STEM Scholarship application form seem straightforward?
3. What challenges do you think Veterans will face as they completed the form?

Looks like we have 5-10 minutes left, so I want to pause and give my colleagues on the phone an opportunity to ask any questions they may have.

[Additional questions from any observers on the phone]

Do you have any questions for us?

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us today. We very much appreciate your willingness to be part of our process. The insights you shared are very valuable and will help us ensure that the forms we design are easy to use.