**STEM Usability Testing Discussion Guide - Round 2**

**P4 – Cassie Barlow**

**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 take a look at the application for a new scholarship for Post-9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries.

Before we get started, a few things I want to mention:

* This entire session should take about 30 minutes. I don't want to keep you much longer than that, so I may occasionally prompt you with the next question or topic.
* During this session, we want to hear your honest opinions. We're not testing your ability. We just want to improve these tools to better meet Veteran's needs. I won't be offended by any opinions you express and welcome your feedback.
* If for any reason and at any time you want to stop the session, please let me know.

We will be working in a prototype so some functionality will not work as expected. For example, when you click on a field, an answer or selection may pre-populate or alternatively, you may click on something and nothing may happen. In those cases, I'll let you know that the functionality isn't working and ask what you would expect to happen.

Are you comfortable if I record the screen and audio as we talk today? We use the recordings to confirm that we have captured your opinions accurately. The recordings are deleted after we finish analysis, and none of your comments will be attributed to you directly.

* If yes: Great - thank you. Once I start recording, I'll ask again so we have your audible confirmation.
* If no: Ok. My team will just observe and take notes as we go.

Start recording.

* I have started recording. I'd like to confirm: Are you comfortable if I record my screen 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.

1. Are you currently using or have you ever used your VA education benefits? Not currently, but have used in the past
   * Which benefit? Post 9/11 GI bill
2. Do you know roughly how much of your education entitlement you have left? About 7 months left. So I have an undergraduate degree and multiple advanced degrees. My educational benefits are being used by my daughter and she got her degree in a non-STEM degree.
3. Are you familiar with the Rogers STEM scholarship? Have not heard of it.

So it’s only for STEM? Because my daughter was non-STEM but is actually going now to get a teaching degree.

* If yes, what have you heard about it?
* If no, as a quick summary of the scholarship, the Rogers STEM Scholarship provides up to nine months of additional Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits (to a maximum of $30,000) to qualifying Veterans/Fry Scholars seeking an undergraduate STEM degree or who have earned a STEM degree and are seeking a teaching certification.

For our session today, I'm going to give you a couple tasks to do online. While you're going through them, it would be really helpful if you'd think aloud - kind of like you'd do if you were talking to yourself. We are interested in your first reactions, what you're thinking & wondering as you go through the process. The more you say about what you are thinking and wondering, the more we’ll learn.

When you think aloud, it helps us understand what works well and where we might want to make improvements to make things even easier. If you have questions, it’s likely that many other Veterans will, as well, so feel free to ask them along the way.

I'm going to give you control of my screen & mouse. I'll pass control to you and you should receive a message that prompts you to control the screen.

Note: Each participant will go through ONE of the tasks below.

**Task 1: Authenticated User with Too Much Entitlement - 15 minutes**

We're going to do some role playing. Let's say you're Sammy Smith and you're using the **Post 9/11 GI Bill** to obtain an undergraduate degree in **Chemistry** from **Chicago State University**. How would you go about filling out this application? You will log in as an authenticated user.

Arriving at this site, the first thing I would do is look at the eligibility criteria to see if I fit that criteria. I would look at those and click on the STEM approved programs to see if my degree was one of those on there. And I probably would not scroll through it. Would do a search to see if I could find Chemistry…and I found…there’s a bunch of Chemistry. And my degree is in basic Chemistry…found my degree. It appears that I am covered so I would go back…how do I go back. Let’s see (back arrow is not working) I would click that to go back and for some reason it’s not taking me back. Typically I would have Xed out at that point if I didn’t have an option to go back. If I didn’t know my remaining benefits, I would do that to ensure. I would continue to look at the steps to see what I need to do next. It appears I need to fill out the application and umm…if I need help I can work with SCO at my school and get more info on how to apply and after I apply the VA will take about 30 days to review and offer me a decision. And I will get my Certificate of Eligibility in the mail and I take that to the certifying official. So I can sign in or start your application without signing in. I’m not sure what the value is of signing in. Maybe I can go back and check my application. Maybe have something here telling me why I need to sign in. Clicked Sign in…so now I’m signing in to…

Ummm…sigh. So you have to have less than 6 months…so as a result, it doesn’t look like I can fill out the application based on the number of months I have left. Am I reading that right? I think I would go back in and check my benefit just to make sure. I would sign in here and check my benefits to make sure that that’s right. I think I would just log out and assume I couldn’t apply because I don’t meet the criteria. The eligibility criteria for the scholarship. And I missed that on the previous page somehow. I guess it was because I didn’t hit the..hmmm…it doesn’t say right here. It would be helpful to have one of these bullets say that you have to have less than 6 months…wait…have you used all your benefits or less than 6 months…okay, I missed that part. Maybe highlight this right here? Or make it bold to make it stand out more. Yeah, I’m looking around here to see if there’s anything that would be useful to me. STEM scholarships…so this is interesting. I have to have less than 6 months eligibility left and the Rogers STEM will provide 9 months of additional…so I would need to read a little bit more. Say I have 5 months left. The Post 9/11 will pay for 5 months and the Rogers STEM will kick in for 9 months after that. And it also appears that Veterans are eligible, but not dependents of Veterans. Oh here it is…Fry scholarships…so yeah, if the Veteran is still alive, the children of the Veteran it appears are not eligible. At least I don’t see that. I’m just reading through the eligibility here. The eligibility criteria for the STEM scholarship. Am I reading that right? I’m reading through this page and learning more about this scholarship. Learning I have too much eligibility left I would close out the application so that when I do get down to less than 6 months, I would come back and apply. And umm…I would probably print something out and maybe put a note on the calendar to come back in the future. That’s what I would do so I don’t forget about it. I think that’s what I would do. Now that I’m familiar with the application and how to apply. I thought I was eligible, but I’m not eligible yet. So is this a fairly new scholarship?

Is there any way to make the eligibility requirements clearer? Where would you like to see it on this page?

First paragraph is really critical – you’re just going to miss it if you click this button. I wonder if – I think trying to get people to read it. Maybe putting this in bold. What I don’t get is why the start your application without signing in button is here. It doesn’t make sense…you would want to have an account on someone so they can tie an application to their educational records and as an applicant, I would want an account to see the status of my account and application. This button is not at the top, it’s on the bottom. It’s an afterthought. If its an option, why isn’t it up here too? I don’t know why. I just don’t know why that would be an option.

Getting a turn-away like I did and for STEM if there’s a dropdown or something for majors…hopefully people aren’t lying about their majors. That was a great list and having the ability to search through it was great. At first I was like “oh my gosh!”

I will certainly share that this scholarship is available.

*When eligibility warning alert on intro page appears*

* What did you think of the eligibility alert message you saw?
  + Where do you think the information is coming from?
  + Do you think this information is accurate?
  + Would you still apply?

*When school information appears*

* What did you think of the pre-population of school information? What would you do if the information wasn't right?

Things to watch for:

* Does the user read the subway map?
* Does the user experience any confusion in determining how to start the application? (Need to scroll to bottom of page)
* How does the user react to the eligibility alert message (entitlement)?

**Upon completion of task**

* In your personal field of study, would you expect to be eligible for this scholarship?
* In terms of applying for this scholarship, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

**Task 2: Unauthenticated User that is Not Chapter 33 - 15 minutes**

We're going to do some role playing. Let's say you're Jamie Lee and you're using the **Montgomery GI Bill** to obtain an undergraduate degree in **Chemistry** from **Chicago State University**. You don't currently have an account and aren't interested in creating one. How would you go about filling out this application?

*When eligibility alert appears*

* What did you think of the eligibility alert message you saw? Would you still apply?

*When 2nd (STEM) eligibility summary page appears*

* What are your thoughts on seeing this information again?
* What would you do at this point?

Things to watch for:

* Does the user read the subway map?
* Does the user experience any confusion in determining how to start the application? (Need to scroll to bottom of page)
* How does the user react to the eligibility alert message (wrong benefit)?
* How does the user react to the 2nd ineligibility alert message?

**Upon completion of task**

* In your personal field of study, would you expect to be eligible for this scholarship?
* In terms of applying for this scholarship, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

**TASK 3: Authenticated User in non-STEM program - 15 minutes**

We're going to do some role playing. Let's say you're Jordan Johnson and you're using the **Post 9/11 GI Bill** to obtain an undergraduate degree in **Philosophy** from **Chicago State University**. How would you go about filling out this application? You will log in as an authenticated user.

*When eligibility alert appears*

* What did you think of the eligibility alert message you saw? Would you still apply?

Things to watch for:

* + Does the user read the subway map?
  + Does the user experience any confusion in determining how to start the application? (Need to scroll to bottom of page)
  + Does the user check the Approved STEM programs document?
  + How does the user react to ineligibility alert?
  + If they click "Check remaining benefits", what would you expect to happen (e.g. modal, new page, etc.)?

**Upon completion of task:**

* In your personal field of study, would you expect to be eligible for this scholarship?
* In terms of applying for this scholarship, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very hard and 5 is very easy, how would you rate this task?

**Post-Task Interview - 10 minutes**

Circle back on

* School contact details - Is your school ID the same as your SSN? If applicable, what would you put down for your school email?

Those are all the tasks I have for you today.

* Do you have general thoughts or feedback on the application that you’d like to share?
* Any questions for me?
* I want to give a chanced to the other people on the line to ask a question.

**Thank-You and Closing - 3 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, thanks so much and enjoy the rest of your day!