

LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT RESULTS STUDENT LEGAL SERVICES

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Student Legal Services (“SLS”) offers numerous legal resources to students, the most prominent being free and confidential 30-minute consultations providing advice and guidance related to their legal questions, rights, and obligations. SLS provided some [600] client consultations in 2009-10, which – in conjunction with providing legal assistance – are intended to support the specific student learning outcomes described below.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

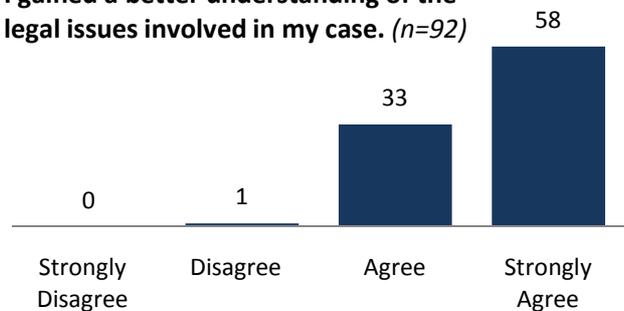
Student Legal Services (SLS) conducted a survey of SLS clients to assess four student learning outcomes, as well as students’ overall experience and satisfaction with the service. The recipients of the survey were 246 students who had consulted with SLS in the 12 months prior to the survey date and for whom an email address was on file.¹ Ninety-five students responded to the survey, for a response rate of 38.6%.

LEARNING OUTCOME #1: AFTER CONSULTING WITH SLS, STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THE LEGAL ISSUES INVOLVED IN THEIR CASES.

The first learning outcome speaks to the fundamental purpose of SLS. Student clients overwhelmingly (**98.9%**) agreed or strongly agreed that consulting with SLS improved their understanding of the legal issues related to their cases. When asked to elaborate on this understanding, representative responses included the following:

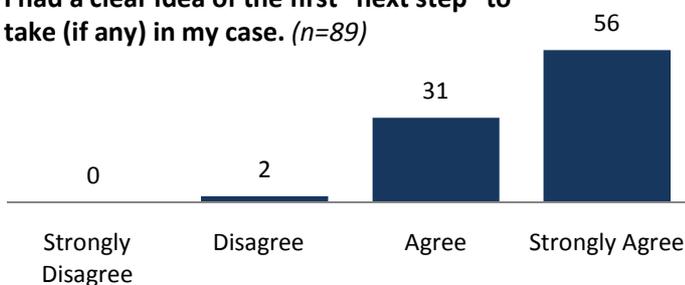
- When I first consulted a [different] lawyer over the phone, I got a lot of scare tactics that I now see were in place to get me to give them a lot of money. After meeting with SLS, I was better aware of what I was facing.
- I learned the general landscape of legal rules that would govern my potential divorce and related child custody arrangement. Mark outlined the principles and referred me to additional useful reference materials that made the process much more approachable/feasible for me.
- Mark made it very easy to understand the actual issue and case at hand that I had, and my options in the CA court. He was very organized and clear about the weight of my case and whether it was viable to pursue. He laid out clearly what the law was, how it was broken and how to carry out my lawsuit.

I gained a better understanding of the legal issues involved in my case. (n=92)



LEARNING OUTCOME #2: AFTER CONSULTING WITH SLS, STUDENTS WILL IDENTIFY AND UNDERSTAND THEIR LEGAL (OR OTHER) OPTIONS RELATED TO THEIR CASES, AND THE RELATIVE MERITS OF THOSE OPTIONS.

I had a clear idea of the first “next step” to take (if any) in my case. (n=89)



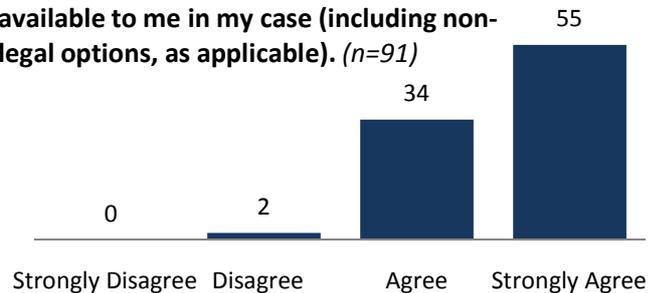
Since SLS does not represent or directly advocate on behalf of students, an important purpose of the consultation is to ensure that students know what to do next in order to resolve the issue that they brought to the office. The vast majority of SLS clients (**97.8%**) agreed or strongly agreed that they had an improved understanding of their available options after consulting with SLS, and a similar

¹ Of utmost concern in conducting the survey was preserving attorney-client privilege and protecting the confidentiality of SLS clients. The survey was administered solely by the Director of SLS, Mark Lucia, through a private account on Zoomerang.com, so no client identities or client information were disclosed. All survey results have been aggregated and presented without link to any identifying information of individual respondents. Recipients of the survey were advised that responding to the survey was completely optional and that responses to short-answer questions should be generalized enough to protect any personal or confidential information that the clients did not want disclosed (even if not attached to any other identifying information).

percentage **(97.7%)** agreed or strongly agreed they knew the first “next step” to take in their case. Sample responses included:

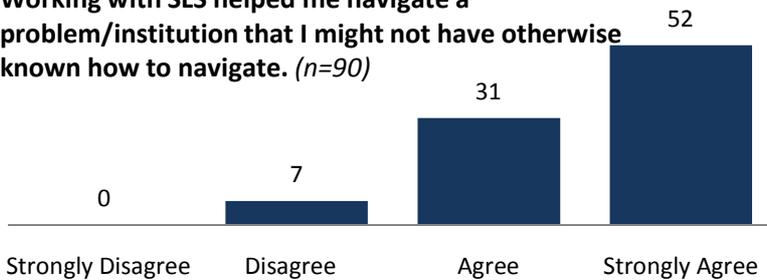
- It was useful to have a professional opinion on how I could approach the issues at hand, whether it would be safest just to ignore certain claims, what kind of letter to draft in response, what language best to adopt, etc.
- I tried to take care of a legal name change on my own, but was overwhelmed by the amount of literature I needed to read as well as how to locate and fill out the proper paperwork. I was clearer on my options and the necessary process after receiving help from Mr. Lucia.
- My understanding changed a lot. I thought I had to hire an attorney to resolve my claim against the person who hit us (my wife and I were in a car accident). After meeting with Mark, I learned I could do it on my own.
- Since I learned my legal rights and the choices available to me, I was able to proceed in making an initial demand for the money owed to me, and then knew exactly how to proceed to small claims court.

I had a better understanding of the options available to me in my case (including non-legal options, as applicable). (n=91)



LEARNING OUTCOME #3: AFTER CONSULTING WITH SLS, STUDENTS WILL KNOW HOW TO NAVIGATE A PROBLEM/INSTITUTION THAT THEY MIGHT NOT HAVE OTHERWISE KNOWN HOW TO NAVIGATE.

Working with SLS helped me navigate a problem/institution that I might not have otherwise known how to navigate. (n=90)



A PROBLEM/INSTITUTION THAT THEY MIGHT NOT HAVE OTHERWISE KNOWN HOW TO NAVIGATE.

Although a high percentage of SLS consultations relate to relatively simple legal matters, for almost all students these matters are nonetheless their first foray into anything remotely legal, making the process quite new and unfamiliar. As a result, SLS commonly helps students work

within a system or bureaucracy that they have never used before; **92.2%** agreed or strongly agreed that SLS helped them navigate an issue or institution that they might not otherwise have known how to navigate.

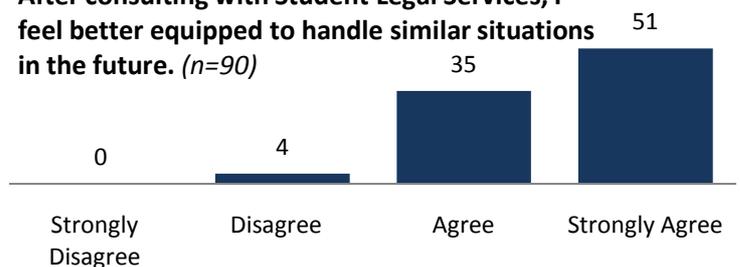
Representative narrative comments on this point included:

- If I had not known the procedures and options that would be available when I went to court, I think the outcome would have been much worse for me - there is no one at the court to help people understand these things, so I had a big advantage by being able to talk with the SLS lawyer beforehand.
- With much more extensive knowledge on renters' rights and applicable California laws, not only am I better prepared for renting myself but can help advise friends as well.
- While I was pretty aware of how the process worked (the point of small claims is to not need a lawyer after all), Mark provided vital reassurance and information that got me to actually go through with an uncomfortable process.
- It was great to have someone walk me through the steps, so that now I can do it myself again if I need to (although hopefully I won't need to!)

LEARNING OUTCOME #4: AFTER CONSULTING WITH SLS, STUDENTS WILL FEEL BETTER EQUIPPED TO HANDLE SIMILAR SITUATIONS IN THE FUTURE.

Ideally, working through a legal question or problem with SLS provides students with transferable skills that they can apply to future experiences, whether legal or not. A high percentage **(95.5%)** of SLS clients agreed or

After consulting with Student Legal Services, I feel better equipped to handle similar situations in the future. (n=90)



strongly agreed that their work with SLS helped them feel better equipped to deal with similar future situations. Sample narrative responses to this question included the following:

- The first time I met with SLS, I was pretty much at a complete loss. The following time another problem happened with the same person, I was better able to prepare myself for the court trial. I went in to SLS again to make sure I was doing everything right and for the most part I was.
- The knowledge offered at SLS was specific enough to be helpful and general enough to be widely applicable to similar instances if the situation were to repeat itself.
- I made some mistakes in the process before talking to legal services. That will not happen again.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT OBSERVATIONS

In addition to four specific learning outcomes, SLS has a mission that captures a broader learning goal:

SLS will support student retention by improving students' ability to stay in school via high-quality counseling and assistance with their legal issues.

SLS seeks to foster student success at Cal by providing counseling and assistance that enable students to focus on school priorities and limit the potential distraction created by legal matters. When asked whether the legal issue they brought to SLS could have (or did have) an impact on their ability to stay in school, a remarkable **70.7%** of SLS clients responded "Yes." Of those students, **66.2%** said "Yes" when asked whether the assistance they received from SLS **improved their ability to stay in school.** This is particularly important given that students consulting with SLS come from underrepresented groups in higher numbers than in the overall student population, and that **77.3%** of respondents said that if not for SLS, they would have no other access to legal counseling.

These results demonstrate that SLS is serving its big-picture goal of supporting

student retention, and student comments bear out the variety of ways that SLS offers this support:

- With the money that I earned from my settlement I am able to pay for tuition next year!!!! Thank you SLS!!!
- SLS helped me get out of a bad living situation into a clean, healthy facility with adequate study spaces, fewer distractions and less excessive noise.
- The SLS counsel I received was critical to overcoming a legal issue involving my dissertation. It would have been impossible for me to proceed with my dissertation research without a resolution.
- I was in a terrible situation with a landlord, which led to a personal crisis and made it difficult to function. The legal advice I obtained helped extract me from that situation, and return to productive, intellectual work.
- The last thing on earth students should be dealing with is being taken advantage of by grown adults in landlord positions. The SLS helps them focus on their goals by providing excellent service and care.
- My legal battle this semester was tiring and long, but Mark pushed me in the right direction, provided all the right resources to make a successful case, and his kind and helpful service made a huge impact in my life!

"I was in a very stressed, time-sensitive and financially sensitive situation in which SLS helped me to take necessary steps to resolve. The time and trouble avoided with SLS's advice helped me to route my time and energy toward successful studies."

One additional positive note is that client satisfaction levels with SLS remain very high. A full **100%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "SLS is a worthwhile/beneficial service" (with 93.4% strongly agreeing), and **100%** agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend SLS to a friend (91.3% strongly agreeing). Similarly, **98.9%** of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that they would use SLS again if they had another legal issue or question. Overall, **96.7%** were satisfied or very satisfied with SLS (73.9% being very satisfied).