

Student Legal Services

2012-13 Assessment and Learning Outcomes Report

Overview

Student Legal Services (“SLS”) offers students free and confidential consultations with an attorney for advice and guidance related to their legal questions, rights, and obligations. Areas of law include **landlord-tenant, criminal, traffic and alcohol citations, credit issues and collections, auto and health insurance, accidents and personal injury, consumer fraud, technology and privacy issues, general contract law, small claims actions, basic estate planning matters, and family law.** SLS provided **842 client consultations in 2012-13** (up from 786 in 2011-12) to help students resolve legal issues and to foster the student learning outcomes described below.

SLS conducted two client surveys (Dec. 2012 and May 2013) to assess four learning outcomes and satisfaction with the service. The survey went to 318 SLS clients for whom a valid email address was on file.¹ The response rate was 39.3%.

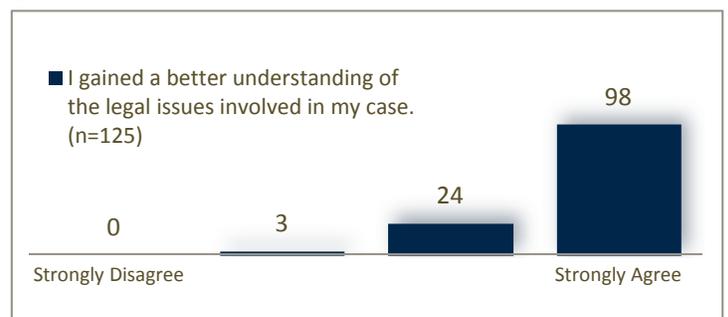
Learning Outcome Assessment Results

Learning Outcome #1: After consulting with SLS, students will understand the legal issues involved in their cases.

Student clients almost universally (**97.6%**) agreed or strongly agreed that consulting with SLS improved their understanding of the legal issues related to their cases.

Representative comments included the following:

- I went from thinking I was helpless to knowing that I had enforceable rights.
- My situation was totally clarified and potential resolutions were laid out. I left with both clear understanding of next steps and significantly less stress.
- I had no idea what was going on before I talked to Mark and came out of my first meeting with him understanding where I stood and with a plan of action that ended up working out perfectly for me.
- I was aware of my rights as a renter and gained insight in how to negotiate with my landlord.
- I understood the process of how a divorce works as well as the specific needs of my particular case.
- I had more confidence and more knowledge in taking the next step necessary to solving my problem.
- My understanding of the relevant legal issue completely changed. I felt confident that in time my issue would be resolved because I had the law on my side and the procedure I had to follow was clearly stated.
- I felt empowered to carry out what I felt was the appropriate action for my situation.
- As a foreign student, I didn't have the understanding necessary to manage the legal situation I experienced. SLS not only improved my understanding, but thanks to very good advice I did properly manage it.

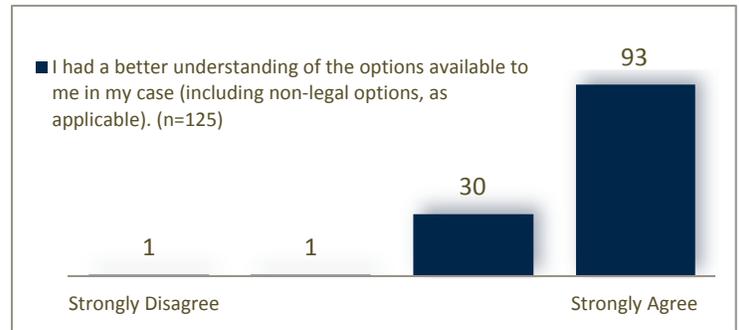


¹ To preserve attorney-client privilege and protect the confidentiality of SLS clients, the survey was administered solely by the Director of SLS, Mark Lucia, through a private account. All survey results are aggregated and presented without link to any identifying information of respondents. Survey recipients were advised that (i) responding was completely optional and (ii) short-answer responses 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). Not all SLS clients provide an email address (it is not mandatory to do so), hence the number of survey recipients is typically lower than the total number of SLS clients.

Learning Outcome #2: Students will identify and understand the legal options related to their cases, and the relative merits of those options.

Since SLS does not directly represent students, they need to clearly understand what to do next to address their legal issues. Almost all clients (**98.4%**) agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of their available options after consulting with SLS, and the same percentage (**98.4%**) agreed or strongly agreed they knew the first “next step” to take in their case. Illustrative narrative responses included:

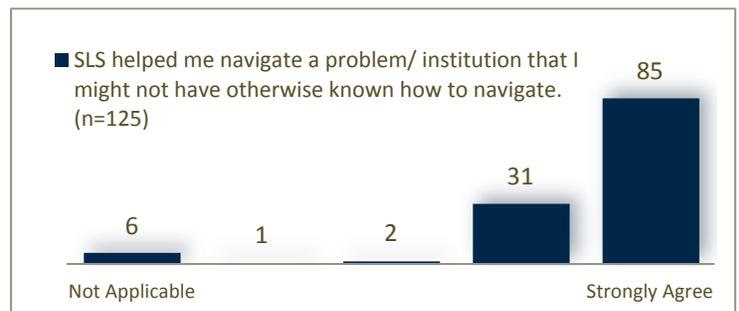
- I actually understood what options I had and how to proceed. I knew how to deal with different parties involved, for instance, and the legalities and implications of each option.
- I knew what my options were, what was required for each, and the chances of being able to fulfill my needs with each one of the options.
- Legal jargon and processes were explained to me fully. I also was very grateful that despite the fact that SLS never personally heard of a case like mine, they were able to help me think through the situation.
- I was told of a legal option that I was never aware of and it saved me a lot of time, money, and trouble.
- We had no idea what to do and we were extremely frustrated. After consulting with SLS, we had a plan for what options were available to us and what to do if those options didn't work.
- I had no idea what my options were, and Mark laid it all out for me.
- After being able to discuss my options, I felt more greatly empowered to move forward without fear of making a poor decision.
- There are many possible options from which I can choose. I'm not in the position of a victim any more.



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.

Most SLS consultations involve relatively simple legal matters, but for almost all students these matters are new and unfamiliar – so SLS often helps students work through a problem or bureaucracy they've never experienced. **97.6%** agreed or strongly agreed that SLS helped them navigate an issue or institution that they might not otherwise have known how to navigate. Typical comments included:

- Helped me navigate a legal process that I never had been a part of before. I knew what to do in court.
- I would not have turned in a legal notice or cited any laws and would have been abused by my landlord had I not come to SLS.
- SLS helped me know exactly what paperwork, where and when, needed to be filed, as well as what courthouses were relevant.
- I left the consultation with a lot of good information that I was able to share with others.
- I had never before dealt with any such issues, and I left feeling like I knew what to do.
- I felt equipped to make educated decisions in my legal dealings and the court system. I was clueless beforehand.

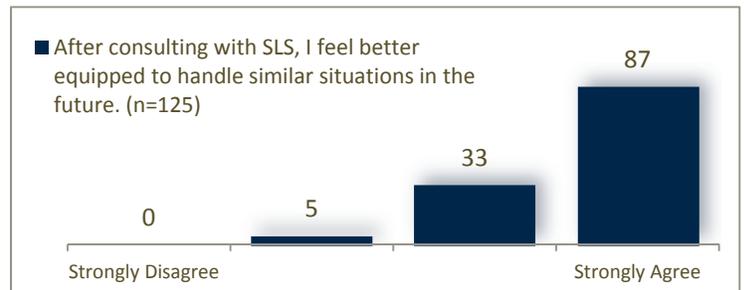


Learning Outcome #4: After consulting with SLS, students will feel better equipped to handle similar situations in the future.

Working through a legal question or problem with SLS may help students develop transferable skills that apply to future experiences, whether legal or not. Most (96.0%) SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that their

work with SLS helped prepare them for similar future situations. Related responses included the following:

- I feel more confident to do research and figure out things myself before giving up.
- I am now aware of all my insurance/liability waiver options. Also, knowing that SLS can help with legal issues is a good emotional/ psychological safety net.
- More awareness of my rights and the legal process mean that I feel much better equipped to deal with similar situations (although I hope they don't arise!)
- Learning about a demand letter was extremely helpful because I can see using such a letter in a future situation if money is owed, or if a landlord is not fulfilling their obligations.
- I feel like I have adequate information to make decisions in a similar case as I know all the risks involved and all the rights that I have in the situation.



General Assessment/Survey Observations

Student success and retention

In addition to four specific learning outcomes, the SLS mission emphasizes 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 fosters 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, **53.3%** of SLS clients responded "Yes." Of those students, **64.5%** 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 and lower-income families in much higher numbers than in the overall student population, and that **75.6%** of respondents said that if not for SLS, they would have no other access to legal counseling. Student comments describe the variety of ways that SLS offers this support:

- My landlord tried to illegally evict me from my home; had I fallen for his ruse, my grades would have suffered.
- Prior to going to SLS, I couldn't focus in class and barely slept because I kept thinking about my legal issue. I also felt I couldn't go to my family for this and so I would have had no other help.
- I don't think I handled school very well prior to coming to SLS. In addition, knowing that there is someone I could turn to and rely on for advice was emotionally comforting as well.
- The situation would've taken a major financial toll affecting my expenses for school as well.
- When we finally went to SLS and learned our rights and that we were safe, a huge weight was lifted from us and we were able to focus again on school.
- I had major financial issues because of my case and Mark helped me solve them. I was able to stay in school because of Mark's counsel and advice.
- I had to move out of my apartment quickly due a toxic mold problem. My wife and I were seriously ill with very little health support. If we hadn't had good legal advice, we would never have been able to take the necessary steps to secure our financial future. Without SLS I probably would have abandoned my degree.

Student financial support and recovery

SLS helps students financially, as well: 21.7% of respondents said that SLS helped them collect or recover money that they would not have otherwise collected or recovered. Twenty-four students specified amounts they actually recovered or saved with SLS assistance (several matters were still pending); **these amounts ranged from \$100 to \$7,300, and averaged \$1,833.**

Student satisfaction with service

Client satisfaction levels with SLS are very high. **100%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “SLS is a worthwhile/beneficial service” (with 93.6% strongly agreeing), and **99.2%** agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend SLS to a friend (95.1% strongly agreeing). Similarly, **98.4%** of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that they would use SLS again if they had another legal issue or question (93.5% strongly agreed). Overall, **95.9%** were satisfied or very satisfied with SLS (87.0% being very satisfied). Comments included:

- Everyone was kind and professional. I was able to get an appointment quickly and receive actionable advice.
- Mr. Lucia was very informative, helpful, sympathetic listener and gave much needed advice.
- Mark was very personable and concerned, and went out of his way to discuss in depth with me things that were bothering me and options that I had.
- Mark was approachable, informative, and encouraging.
- I met with Mark, and he was very approachable about my sensitive issue. I felt like it was a safe place to talk. Thank you for all your help! There is no way I otherwise would've received this help.
- Mark is great. Non-judgmental, genuine, very helpful and takes time to fully understand the situation and go through all possibilities/options.
- Mark really knows his stuff. He's very helpful and patient. I was able to see my options, what I should and shouldn't do, and learn about some resources that might help me.
- Very friendly and nonjudgmental. Made me feel comfortable and better about my situation right away.
- Mark made it possible for me to reenter the United States. One of the most helpful people I've met in the U.S. I am deeply grateful to him and equally impressed by the quality of his professional skills.
- Unfortunately I believe that people try to take advantage of young students who don't know much about the legal system and what they can do to stand up for themselves. Luckily the SLS is there to help students with legal advice which is great and I've recommended it to many of my former peers.
- SLS was extremely helpful; we were supported, listened to, advised and understood. I was very impressed with the amount of time spent on our case and the help we received.
- Mark was kind, informative and really seeking to help me get my problem handled. GREAT asset to the Berkeley campus.
- Mark really took the time we needed to help us with our issues. He was thoughtful, had a great attitude, and had great knowledge of the issues.

Areas for improvement

Students identified three general areas where they would like to see potential enhancements of SLS:

- Shorter wait times for appointments (during certain busy times of the year – most notably August-October and March-April – SLS appointments are highly impacted and students may need to wait up to a week)
- Increased advertising of SLS
- Attorney representation and appearances in court on behalf of students