

## LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT RESULTS

### STUDENT LEGAL SERVICES 2010-11

#### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Student Legal Services (“SLS”) offers numerous legal resources to students, the most prominent being free and confidential consultations providing advice and guidance related to their legal questions, rights, and obligations. SLS provided **705 client consultations** in 2010-11, which – in addition to helping students resolve legal issues – are intended to support the student learning outcomes described below.

#### ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

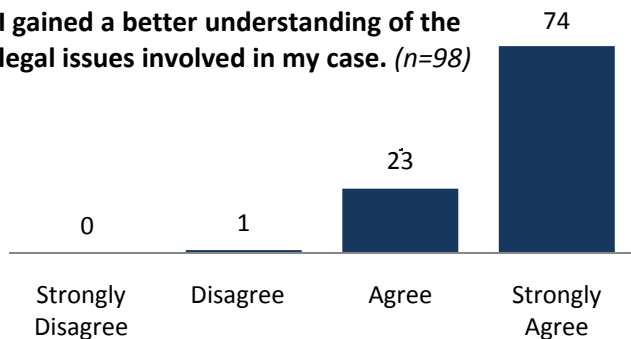
SLS conducted two surveys (in January and May 2011) of clients to assess four student learning outcomes and students’ overall experience and satisfaction with the service. The recipients of the surveys were 220 students who had consulted with SLS in the 8 and 4 months, respectively, prior to the applicable survey and for whom a valid email address was on file.<sup>1</sup> Ninety-nine students responded, for a response rate of 45.0%.

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

The first learning outcome captures the main purpose of SLS. Student clients almost universally (**99.0%**) agreed or strongly agreed that consulting with SLS improved their understanding of the legal issues related to their cases. Representative narrative comments from clients included the following:

- SLS gave me the resources to understand the implications of the legal paperwork involved in my issue, and make a more informed decision.

**I gained a better understanding of the legal issues involved in my case. (n=98)**



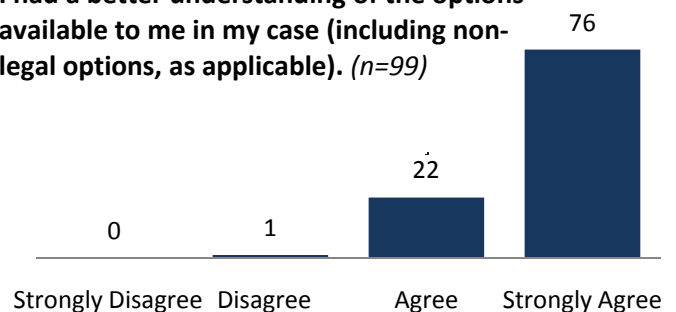
- Mark helped me understand the issues of my case more clearly and the different approaches I could take in resolving the matter. He also reviewed the letter I sent to the court and provided me with the time and information necessary for me to understand my case.
- Mark listened to all my concerns and went over them one at a time. We brainstormed the consequences of each option, coming to agreement on the best course of action.

#### 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.

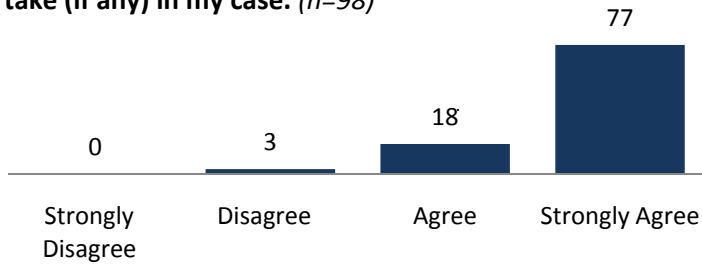
SLS does not represent or directly advocate on behalf of students, so it is very important that students know what to do next to resolve the issue that brought them to SLS. Almost all clients (**99.0%**) agreed or strongly agreed that they had an improved understanding of their options after consulting with SLS, and a similar percentage (**96.9%**) agreed or strongly agreed they knew the first “next step” to take in their case. Sample narrative responses included:

**I had a better understanding of the options available to me in my case (including non-legal options, as applicable). (n=99)**



<sup>1</sup> 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, a password-protected SurveyMonkey.com account, 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).

**I had a clear idea of the first “next step” to take (if any) in my case. (n=98)**



- So much help, support, and fresh ideas for how to handle my case. It made me aware of prospects outside of hiring an expensive lawyer or paying a fine.
- SLS patiently explained my options and meticulously went over my next steps in detail with me. SLS also consulted with me in a timely manner when I was subsequently drafting letters.
- Mark not only answered my questions, gave thorough advice as to how I should go about

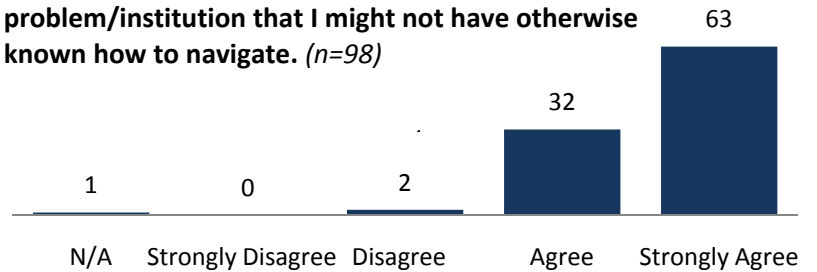
negotiating my situation, but also referred me to other helpful resources.

- SLS was very helpful at laying out the options I had with my case, and helping me formulate the best response. Mark also assisted with claim requests and subsequent responses to the companies involved.
- The counselor covered every possibility objectively and gave me all of the time needed to understand my case. He also did further research after I left and emailed me his findings.
- Mark listened to me and carefully explained the terms of the contract, what my outcomes could be, and what would be the costs of each choice.

**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.**

Although most SLS consultations involve fairly simple legal matters, almost all SLS clients are facing their first experience with the law, making it new and unfamiliar. As a result, SLS often helps students work within a system or bureaucracy that they have never used before. **96.9%** agreed or strongly agreed that SLS helped them navigate an issue or institution that they might not otherwise have known how to navigate. Representative comments on this point included:

**Working with SLS helped me navigate a problem/institution that I might not have otherwise known how to navigate. (n=98)**

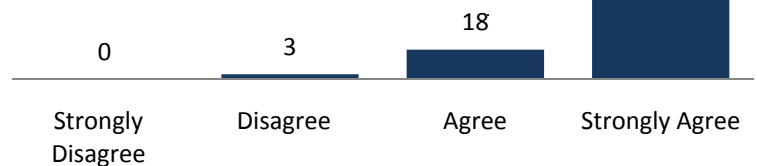


- SLS was a huge help to me because I had no idea what I should be doing in court, what the consequences of my charges were, and what I options I had. The whole situation was daunting, but after meeting with Mark, I felt much more in control because I understood what I needed to do.
- SLS set out step-by-step measures for me to protect myself on my financial/debt issues and gave me a wealth of information which demystified the process(es) I'm facing.
- Mark provided crucial information about the procedures, possible outcomes, repercussions and ways to proceed [in] my case. He empowered me with the knowledge and confidence necessary to represent myself.

**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. A high percentage (**97.0%**) of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that their work with SLS helped them feel better equipped to deal with similar future situations. Related responses included the following:

**After consulting with Student Legal Services, I feel better equipped to handle similar situations in the future. (n=99)**



- With Mark’s advice, I successfully resolved my issue. I also learned a lot about the law, and feel more confident in solving legal problems

independently in the future.

- Mark was extremely helpful in educating me on my rights and even assisting me in communicating my concerns to my landlord. I truly felt empowered as a citizen after meeting with Mark.
- Mark taught me how to write a letter to protect myself from being taken advantage of by my landlord, and I plan to use similar protections with future landlords.
- Before meeting with SLS, I had no idea what to do. Afterwards, I knew exactly how to prepare myself and now I could do it again, or even give someone else ideas about how to handle a similar problem.

## GENERAL ASSESSMENT OBSERVATIONS

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 assistance that enables students to focus on academics and limit the potential distraction of 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, **43.8%** of SLS clients responded “Yes.” Of those students, **78.6%** said “Yes” when asked whether the assistance they received from SLS **improved their ability to stay in school**. This is particularly important, since SLS clients come from underrepresented groups in much higher numbers than in the overall student population<sup>2</sup>, and **82.8%** of respondents said that without SLS, they would have no access to legal counseling. Related comments describe the variety of ways that SLS offers this support:

- The advice offered took off a lot of stress, made me aware of my rights, and enabled me to focus on school rather than incessantly worrying about having to drop out or drop to half time to pick up more hours at work.
- The SLS attorney saved my career at Cal.
- I was seriously ill with a [health] problem. Mark helped me explain to the [healthcare professional] that the second [procedure] should be free. I really needed it as I couldn't focus at all and was going down the drug route, but after shelling out so much money for the first one, I really couldn't afford the second.
- It helped me clear away some legal issues which could have affected my status in school.
- Without resolving the legal issue, my finances would have prevented me from affording school.

One way SLS supports retention is by facilitating the recovery of money. **30.1%** of respondents said that because of SLS, they collected or recovered money that they would not have otherwise collected or recovered (such as security deposits, excess credit fees, debt forgiveness, small claims recovery, and better-negotiated insurance claims). Twenty-three students identified specific amounts of money that SLS helped them recover; these amounts totaled **\$22,134**, ranging from \$200 to \$3,000 and averaging **\$962 per student, with a median of \$800**.

Finally, client satisfaction levels with SLS remain very high. **99.0%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “SLS is a worthwhile/beneficial service” (with 92.9% strongly agreeing), and **100%** agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend SLS to a friend (94.9% strongly agreeing). Similarly, **100%** of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that they would use SLS again if they had another legal issue or question. Overall, **94.9%** were satisfied or very satisfied with SLS (83.7% being very satisfied). Comments included:

- This is a phenomenal service and I am so grateful to have it. It certainly enhanced my time at Berkeley.
- Mark is great! One of the most helpful people I've meet in the 5 years I've been at Berkeley.
- Mark has a very nice demeanor - he is relaxing yet supportive and somehow calmly outraged on your behalf. This made me feel much better.
- SLS went above and beyond what I would have expected from a student legal advice service.
- I can't emphasize how much SLS has helped reduce the amount of stress I've had to deal with regarding these issues. Truly an invaluable resource.

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<sup>2</sup> The following groups consult with SLS in a proportion higher than their average numbers on campus: African American and Native American students (both more than double the campus average), Hispanic/Latino students (70% higher than campus average), and Pell Grant eligible undergraduates (41% more than campus average). [All student demographic data is aggregated.]