

Student Legal Services

2015-16 Assessment and Learning Outcomes Report

Overview

Student Legal Services (“SLS”) offers students free and confidential consultations with an attorney for advice, guidance, and coaching related to their legal questions, rights, and obligations. Areas of law include **landlord-tenant, criminal, traffic and alcohol citations, small claims actions, credit issues and collections, auto and health insurance, accidents and personal injury, consumer fraud, technology and privacy issues, general contract law, basic estate planning matters, and family law.** SLS provided **972 client consultations in 2015-16** (up from 934 in 2014-15) to help students resolve legal issues and to foster the student learning outcomes described below.

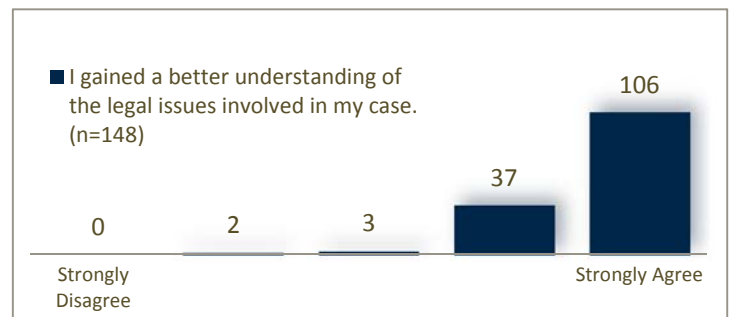
SLS conducted two client surveys (Dec. 2015 and May 2016) to assess four learning outcomes and satisfaction with the service. The survey went to 461 SLS clients with a valid email address on file.¹ The response rate was 32.1%.

Learning Outcome Assessment Results

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

Almost all student clients (**96.6%**) 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 knew how to represent myself and present my case to a judge. SLS helped me to refine my argument and make sure that it was legally correct and relevant.
- I felt much clearer about my rights. I now know there is something I can do to protect my rights.
- I had a broader and deeper knowledge of my legal rights, options, and potential pathways of a legal case.
- I was able to formulate a draft letter to my landlord about my rights as a tenant.
- I was unaware that what my landlord was doing was illegal and baseless until I met with SLS.
- I had a comfortable understanding of the laws surrounding service/mental assistance animals.
- Mark explained to us really clearly our rights as tenants. He helped us terminate our lease for legal cause.
- SLS gave me new angles that made my case even stronger.
- I better understood my position and what to ask for in a child custody and support petition.
- Mark helped me better understand the complex legal issues involved with banking contracts.
- Mr. Lucia carefully walked me through the process and my options, and I do not think I would have achieved the same result without his help.



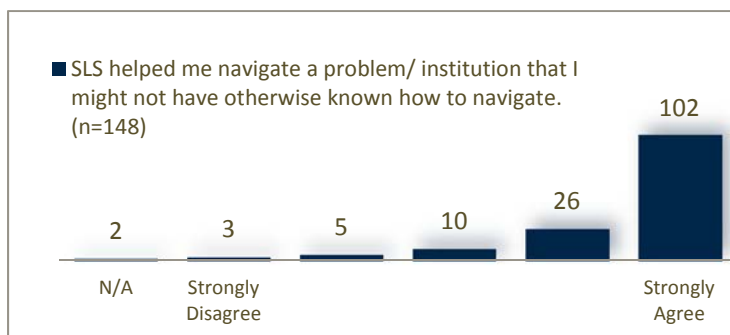
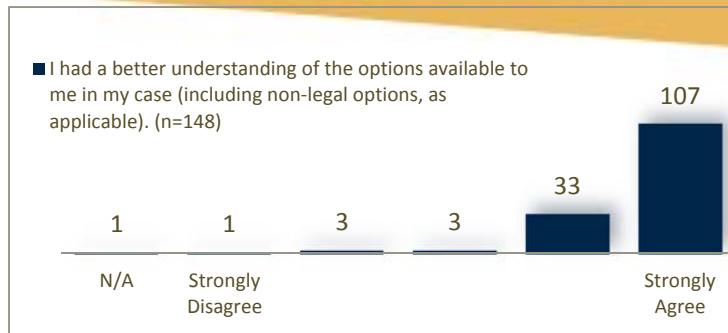
¹ To preserve attorney-client privilege and protect the confidentiality of SLS clients, the survey was administered solely by the Director of SLS, Mark Lucia, through a private account. All survey results are aggregated and presented without link to any identifying information of respondents. Survey 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.

SLS does not represent students, so it's important for them to understand the next step(s) to address their legal issues.

94.6% of clients agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of their options after consulting with SLS, and **93.2%** agreed or strongly agreed they knew the first "next step" to take. Illustrative responses included:

- I was informed about the legal options and how these scenarios would play out/affect my case and future.
- Mark gave more clarity and actionable suggestions on how to approach the issue.
- As a tenant in Berkeley, I learned had more options than I realized, and felt empowered about my situation.
- Mark gave me a clear understanding on the options I had to clear the case. After analyzing the aspects I was concerned about, we choose the best one for me. Fortunately the case resolved quickly and easily thanks to SLS.
- I learned about a city petition process and small claims court.
- I had no idea what my options were before and I left with a pretty clear idea of what steps I should take from there, and the potential consequences of various options.
- Mark explained ways to communicate my position in a way that led to the other party addressing my concerns.
- I knew how to proceed to contact relevant government agencies and city offices.
- Not only did Mark help me make a list of courses of action depending on how my employer responded, he even helped me compose an email to my employer with appropriate language to apply pressure. He followed up with me several times to make sure we got the outcome we were hoping for.
- I knew all my options moving forward and I felt confident in the course of action I was advised to take.



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.

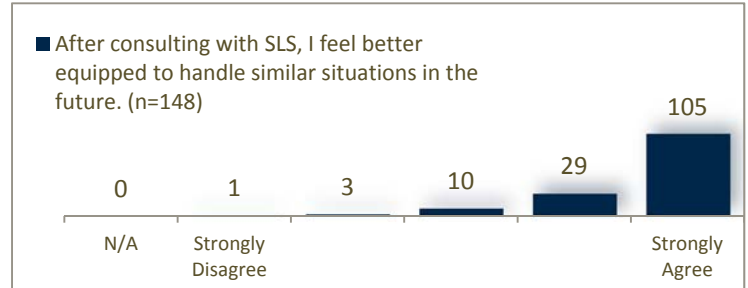
Students are often unfamiliar with legal matters, so SLS helps them work through a new form of problem or bureaucracy. **86.5%** agreed or strongly agreed that SLS helped them navigate an issue or institution they might not have known how to navigate:

- I filed a petition with the Berkeley Rent Board, and won.
- I was able to prepare the necessary documents and go to court with confidence.
- We sent a letter to my landlord, and the landlord backed down.
- Knowing about the laws and codes gave me more tools for any negotiation.
- I sent a demand letter that Mark helped me write.
- Mark helped me understand the relevant information to include in my letter and also helped formulate a strategy to address the issue.
- I had hard time even starting to read a "divorce agreement" because it hurt so much. With Mr. Lucia's help, I was able to say "it doesn't work that way" calmly to my husband when he was unreasonable.
- Mark made me aware of the dangerous situation that my family and I are facing and I was able to investigate to collect more information to show the proper agencies so that we can be protected.
- I was much more confident dealing with the insurance company after our meeting. Thanks!!
- I was able to keep my service animal at home for my sister who is struggling with clinical depression.

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 foster transferable skills that apply to future student experiences, legal or otherwise. **90.5%** of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that their work with SLS helped prepare them for similar future situations:

- SLS helped me better understand the legal relationship between tenant and landlord, which will be a crucial part of my life from here on out.
- I feel better about asking for legal advice and help and an overall sense of empowerment that I didn't have before speaking with Mark.
- In the future I'll be far more careful in negotiating specific contractual terms with employers, because of how messy it can become.
- I know how to better document and protect myself in the future.
- I would be able to better handle and navigate the tenant-landlord situations I may encounter.
- Understanding my rights, and how to protect myself, reassured my confidence to stand against any situation.
- Mark, believe it or not, you helped prepare me for the real world. Thank you for that.
- I know the legal resources that are available to me now.
- I had absolutely no idea what to do and was panicking, and meeting with SLS helped me map out what I should do and understand my current position more clearly. Also put me in contact with great references.



General Assessment/Survey Results and 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 enabling students to focus on school priorities and limit the potential distraction created by legal matters. **93.3%** of clients agreed or strongly agreed that the legal issue they brought to SLS **was causing them stress**, **83.0%** agreed or strongly agreed that it was **distracting them from their studies**, and **12.2%** agreed or strongly agreed that **without legal help they would have considered leaving school**. Of those students who agreed with the first statement above, **82.1%** said "Yes" when asked whether the assistance they received from SLS **improved their ability to stay in school and/or to focus on their studies**. This is important, since students from underrepresented ethnic minority groups and lower-income families consult with SLS in **much higher numbers** than their representation in the overall student population, and that **75.7%** of respondents said that if not for SLS, they would have no access to legal counseling. Student comments describe the many ways SLS offers this support:

- SLS dropped my stress levels by orders of magnitude. I was able to put my legal worries on the back burner.
- Mark Lucia saved my grades this semester. Just seeing him literally lowered my blood pressure and heart rate because he is so reassuring and kind. He connects well with people.
- SLS helped relieve financial stress, and helped me feel the system is not completely geared to keep you down.
- Receiving support and tips on my legal problem was a huge turning point on my first semester at Berkeley.
- With support/knowledge from SLS I no longer felt helpless in my situation. I felt empowered to change it.
- Before my consultation, it was consuming my mind and it was incredibly difficult for me to focus on school.
- Without my the help of my SLS advisor to navigate the situation, or even making me aware that our landlord was bullying me, it is likely I would have been without a home.
- The advice really took a lot of weight off my shoulders.

- SLS helped me feel more in control of my life and find a way to make school work for me. Before talking to SLS, I couldn't focus on school, relationships with my friends, and didn't feel like going to college was even an option.
- Getting help from Mark relieved my stress and improved my financial situation quite a bit.
- After a consultation with Mark I felt informed, calm and capable of pursuing actions to rectify the situation. Mark was really stellar at giving me information, looking carefully at the documents and correspondence I had, and considering the options I was thinking about, weighing their pros and cons.
- SLS relieved a huge amount of pressure and stress I was feeling - my only regret was that I didn't come sooner!
- Mark helped me put together a strategy that allowed me to address the situation in a way that took my mind off of the issue and allowed me to focus on the things that are important in my life.
- SLS was a wonderful experience in the darkest moment of my life. I cannot thank Mr. Lucia enough for helping me. He sort of awakened me to stand my own. After I left, I felt much more stable and confident. He did not just gave me legal information, but also changed the angle to look at the problems and made things possible. I was lost and just wanted to run away from the problem, but he helped me to face it and I did. THANK YOU!
- Thanks to Mark's letter, I was able to stay in my apartment and complete my lease without further interruptions.

Student financial support and recovery

SLS also helps students financially: 29.6% of respondents recovered money that they would not have otherwise collected without help from SLS. Of the students who specified funds actually recovered or saved with SLS assistance (several matters were still pending), **the amounts ranged from \$275 to \$8,000, and averaged \$1,710.**

Student satisfaction with service and sense of connection with the University

Client satisfaction levels with SLS are very high. **97.9%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “SLS is a worthwhile/beneficial service” (with **95.9% strongly agreeing**), and **95.2%** agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend SLS to other students in need of assistance (with **91.0% strongly agreeing**).

73.8% of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience with SLS, **they feel more connected to the University.** Another **93.0%** agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience with SLS, **they are more aware of resources available at the University.** Overall, **95.9%** were satisfied or very satisfied with SLS (91.1% being very satisfied). Comments included:

- SLS was amazing! Attorney Mark Lucia was personable, compassionate, understanding and incredibly helpful and professional. I felt empowered after our meeting. And very thankful for the experience.
- Mark Lucia was very easy to talk to. I felt like my confidentiality was protected and so I felt he was someone I could trust during a difficult time in my life. He also followed up by email with helpful tips on my case.
- Mr. Lucia's professionalism, respect and insightfulness made it an absolute pleasure to work with him. He was diligent in follow ups and always welcomed my phone calls for additional information.
- Mark is extremely friendly and makes you feel like he really cares about your case. He takes the time to answer all questions and to contact outside resources if he doesn't have the answers himself.
- Mark is absolutely awesome and helpful in so many different areas and knows the resources to look up any information that a student might need. He helps empower students that don't know what to do.
- Mark was super helpful and made me more at ease about my legal situation.
- The services provided were unsurpassed. I knew where to research, what to anticipate in the hearing, how to position myself for a successful hearing and, from a psychological standpoint, felt my best interests were at hand from a professional who cared.
- I have never dealt with so much "crazy" as I have in Berkeley, and without SLS I would have been lost.
- I would have been homeless, or lived in an apartment with rats, mold, no heater, and ceiling leaks if I had not consulted with Mark Lucia. He helped educate me of my rights and helped me be able to remove myself from an unsafe apartment with a belligerent landlord.
- I didn't know how to use the legal system to what was owed to me without incurring a large legal cost, and for that reason SLS was a life saver.

- Mark is a great resource and advocate for students.
- This is an extremely important service for students who don't have financial access to legal consulting.
- SLS was helpful, knowledgeable, experienced, and resolved the situation quickly so that I could return to focusing on school. Every question was answered thoroughly, I left feeling prepared and well informed.
- Mark was incredibly competent, accessible, patient and friendly. He deserves recognition for this!
- Mark was very reassuring, and his demeanor and empathy helped calm my anxiety greatly.
- I really appreciate SLS's patience, knowledge and professionalism throughout phone calls and appointment.
- Great experience - Mark was very understanding, helpful, and responsive.
- The SLS lawyer was super friendly and made me feel like I had someone on my side.
- I felt he took the time to understand my problems and help me prioritize how to seek the positive change I was looking to achieve in the situation.
- Mark was very knowledgeable, human, helpful and patient. He explained everything and made sure he answered all of my questions.
- Mark really cared about the issue I was dealing with and worked hard to create a strategy for a positive outcome.
- Mr. Lucia's manner and great listening skills with his supportive and caring personality made me feel secure enough to share my concerns from the beginning. In first five seconds, I knew that I was in the right place to seek help. He made things easier for me to digest and understand the most complicated issue in my life.
- MARK IS AWESOME!! He was very nice and willing to help me. He treated me with respect and did all that he could to help me in my situation. He even followed up with an email for me.
- Mr. Lucia is not only great at explaining legal terms and forms, he also makes you feel comfortable enough to talk to him openly about personal issues.
- Thank goodness for Mark! The school is lucky to have such a talented and caring person working at SLS!
- Mark Lucia is absolutely amazing! I have worked with him on several occasions, and he is absolutely wonderful. Thank goodness for this office!

Areas for improvement

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

- Expansion of the service, including representation and appearances in court on behalf of students and the addition of attorneys with specialized expertise.
- Increased advertising of the service.