

**UC BERKELEY**  
**STUDENT**  
**LEGAL**  
**SERVICES**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2011-2012**

**DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**  
ACCESS - SERVICE - ENGAGEMENT

# STUDENT LEGAL SERVICES

## 2011-12 OVERVIEW

**Mission:** Student Legal Services (“SLS”) supports student retention by improving students’ ability to stay in school via high-quality counseling and assistance with their legal issues. SLS offers the following services to students:

- **Legal Consultations:** Free and confidential 30-minute consultations to currently registered students offering advice and guidance related to their legal questions, rights, and obligations. Areas of law include landlord/tenant law, criminal law, credit issues and collection matters, auto and health insurance claims, accidents and personal injury, consumer fraud, technology and privacy issues, general contract law, small claims actions, traffic and alcohol citations, basic estate planning matters, and family law. Although SLS does not represent students, it assists in the preparation and review of letters, legal documents, and court filings. Where appropriate, SLS provides referrals to outside counsel or other third-party resources.
- **Tip Sheets and Forms:** SLS offers a set of tip sheets and template documents on its Web site that relate to the most common areas of legal questions for students.
- **Informational Workshops:** SLS presents educational sessions about legal rights and obligations on various topics of interest or concern to students.

## PROGRAM AREAS AND RELATED PROGRAMS

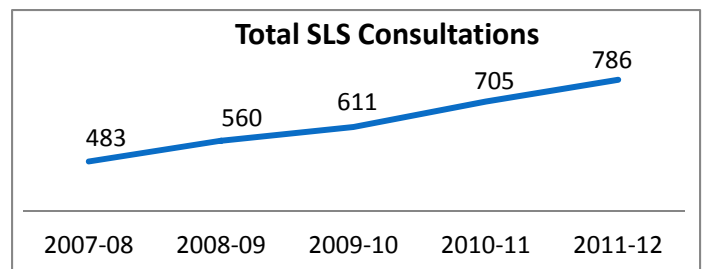
### MOST COMMON LEGAL ISSUES

- Landlord-Tenant (32.7%)
- Police citations for alcohol, shoplifting and other misdemeanor offenses (19.3%)
- Small claims court actions (8.8%)
- Credit problems/consumer fraud (8.1%)
- Family Law (7.3%)
- Auto insurance/accident/other personal injury (7.0%)
- Friend or previous SLS client (42.1%)
- Campus administrative or academic department (28.5%, from 37 different administrative and academic departments)
- Personal research by student (18.4%)
- ASUC Student Legal Clinic, ASUC Renter’s Legal Assistance, and Student Advocate (5.9%)

### TOP REFERRAL SOURCES

## 2011-12 HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY METRICS

- Provided 786 total legal consultations, up from 705 in 2010-11 (29.8% were return visits by students with follow-up needs).
- The following demographic groups consulted with SLS in a proportion higher than their average numbers on campus: African-American students (more than double the campus average), Chicano/Latino students (70% higher than campus average), Native American students (80% higher), students age 22-26 and 35+, transfer admits, undergraduates with lower parental income (median \$50,000 compared to \$80,000 overall), and Pell Grant-eligible undergraduates (42.2% of SLS clients). *[All student demographic data is aggregated.]*
- Offered workshop and trainings on SLS services, landlord-tenant issues, alcohol and the law, working with law enforcement, and preparation for law school.
- Topic areas of growth since previous year: landlord-tenant, credit problems/consumer fraud, and family law.
- Conducted student learning outcomes assessment of SLS clients, with 103 responses to online quantitative and qualitative survey.



## LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT RESULTS

### STUDENT LEGAL SERVICES

#### PROGRAM 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 law, criminal law, credit issues and collections, auto and health insurance, accidents and personal injury, consumer fraud, technology and privacy issues, general contract law, small claims actions, traffic and alcohol citations, basic estate planning matters, and family law.** SLS provided **786 client consultations** in 2011-12 to help students resolve legal issues and support the student learning outcomes described below.

SLS conducted two client surveys (Dec. 2011 and May 2012) to assess four student learning outcomes and client satisfaction with the service. The survey went to 324 recipients who consulted with SLS for whom a valid email address was on file.<sup>1</sup> The response rate was 31.8%.

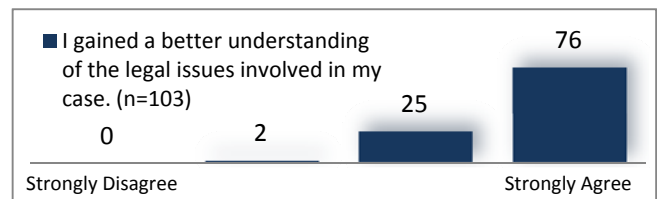
#### LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT RESULTS

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

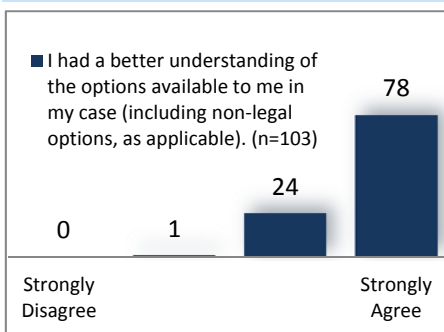
Student clients almost universally (**98.1%**) agreed or strongly agreed that consulting with SLS improved their understanding of the legal issues related to their cases.

Representative comments included the following:

- I know my rights, as well as the reasons behind my case and what I can do to protect myself.
- I received a clear explanation of my rights and the way the legal system in U.S. works in these cases.
- Mark explained the details of my case and addressed my concerns about information I read on the Web.
- I completely understood my legal rights and was able to advocate for them. It was GREAT!
- I didn't know anything about my legal rights, but after talking to Mark I learned that I had a bunch of options.



**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.**

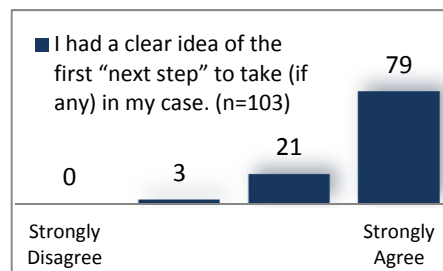


Since SLS does not directly represent students, they need to clearly understand what to do next to address their legal issues. Almost all clients (**99.0%**) agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of their available options after consulting with SLS, and a similar percentage (**97.1%**) agreed or strongly agreed they knew the first “next step” to take in their case. Sample narrative responses included:

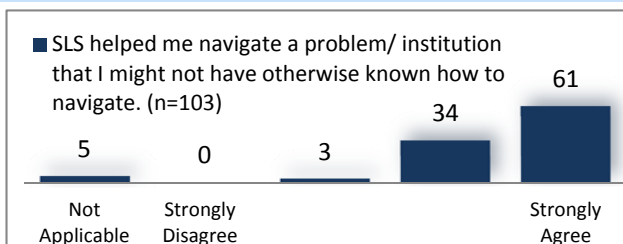
- I understood the process for making a claim and strategies to approach the insurance company.
- I had thought of few options to get out of a very bad living situation before meeting with Mr. Lucia, but he offered a lot more options.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

- Made me realize some important things I would not have thought of myself. Opened up new ways of thinking about what I could do next.
- Before my legal consultation, I only had a hazy idea of what to do in my situation. After talking to SLS, my course of action was much clearer.
- I knew exactly what to do next, step-by-step, to pursue my legal claim for injuries.



### 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.

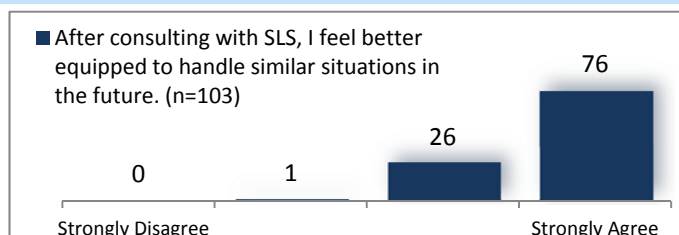


Most SLS consultations involve fairly simple legal matters, but for almost all students these matters are new and unfamiliar – so SLS often helps students work in a system or bureaucracy they have never used before. **96.9%** agreed or strongly agreed that SLS helped them navigate an issue or institution that they might not otherwise have known how to navigate. Representative comments included:

- I would have never known how to navigate my way, and Mark was incredibly helpful in explaining the multitude of options I had.
- With SLS guidance, I knew how to go to the City Zoning Department, Rent Board, and Small Claims Court.
- Mark helped me write a letter to my landlord, and I explained my rights to the landlord, which worked!
- I understood the small claims process and how it works, how long, and what to expect.

### 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 provides transferable skills that students can apply to future experiences, whether legal or not. A high percentage (**99.0%**) of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that their work with SLS helped prepare them for similar future situations. Related responses included the following:



- I am more familiar with how to handle the process, keep detailed records and get all the facts straight.
- I feel less intimidated by the law, because I now recognize there are laws that protect consumers, renters, etc.
- I am more educated on tenant's rights in California and how to prevent future conflicts.
- I'm now concretely aware that people will try to make you think you don't have rights that you actually do have, and that the law is there to fall back on – after trying to address the problem in a non-legal way, first.

## 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, **43.7%** of SLS clients responded "Yes." Of those students, **91.1%** 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 **74.8%** 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:

- SLS helped ensure that my legal issue wouldn't prevent my completion of a yearlong residency at Berkeley.
- Without SLS guidance and support I could have ended up in an unhealthy living situation, which would have disrupted my academic goals.
- The pressure had made me so depressed that I had to seek therapy. After I sought legal counseling at SLS, my academic performance improved because I had more time and energy to focus on my studies.
- I could have faced a financial mess had I not had guidance in avoiding one.
- I was able to keep my financial aid which means I can pay for college.
- The advice I gained from the SLS helped me feel supported during a transitional phase in my life, and my experience with the SLS provided me with the confidence to navigate through this institution effectively.

### STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND RECOVERY

SLS helps students financially, as well: 36.9% of respondents said that SLS helped them collect or recover money that they would not have otherwise collected or recovered. Nineteen students specified amounts they actually recovered or saved with SLS assistance; **these amounts ranged from \$200 to \$3,500, and averaged \$1,059.**

### 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 94.2% strongly agreeing), and **100%** agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend SLS to a friend (93.8% 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, **97.1%** were satisfied or very satisfied with SLS (86.4% being very satisfied). Comments included:

- I had a wonderful experience with SLS. Mark was extremely helpful and comforting. SLS definitely gave me all the answers I needed and the confidence to continue on with my case.
- Super helpful! One of the best advice departments at Berkeley.
- This service is as important as the Tang center to keep students "healthy" during their studies. SLS has been my lifesaver, at least for this semester.
- I cannot express enough gratitude for the guidance provided by Mark Lucia. He is a phenomenal advocate for UC Berkeley students.
- Thanks a lot, SLS really made a difference in the future of my education.

### AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Students also identified a few areas where they would like to see a potential expansion of Student Legal Services. These comments fell into three general areas:

- Shorter wait times for appointments (during certain busy times of the year – most notably August-October and March-April – SLS appointments are highly impacted)
- Wider publicity of SLS
- Direct attorney representation and appearances in court on behalf of students