

Student Legal Services

2018-19 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 **1,161 client consultations in 2018-19** (up from 1,109 in 2017-18) to help students resolve legal issues and to foster the student learning outcomes described below.

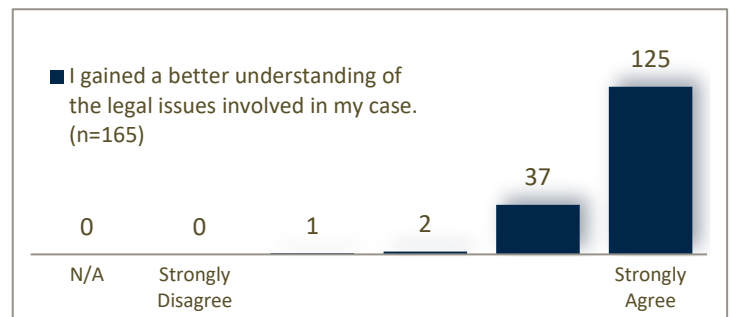
SLS conducted two client surveys (Dec. 2018 and May 2019) to assess four learning outcomes and satisfaction with the service. The survey went to 595 SLS clients with a valid email address on file.¹ The response rate was 27.7%.

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 (**98.2%**) agreed or strongly agreed that consulting with SLS improved their understanding of the legal issues related to their cases. Representative narrative responses included the following:

- I was able to go from a place of "wondering, fear, and have no idea what to do" to after my meeting "I know what I'm going to do now." Truly invaluable.
- I was more aware of my rights as a renter.
- Mark made things super clear for us. He explained step by step and I felt so much better about my situation afterwards.
- My awareness of the steps in the legal process was increased greatly.
- Mark gave me the resources to move forward and get out of a bad situation. He checked every detail of my lease and other documents against different requirements in real time, and provided me with links to the different avenues I might want to pursue.
- I felt much more informed and had a remarkably better understanding of my circumstances, rights, limitations, options, etc.
- My SLS consultation allowed me to better interpret the way the law would be applied to my situation, and without my recent consultation, I would perhaps been lost and passed up life changing opportunities in my life.
- I knew what to do. I had a specific background of what laws applied to me, how to approach my issue, and forms to use in pursuit of fixing my problem.



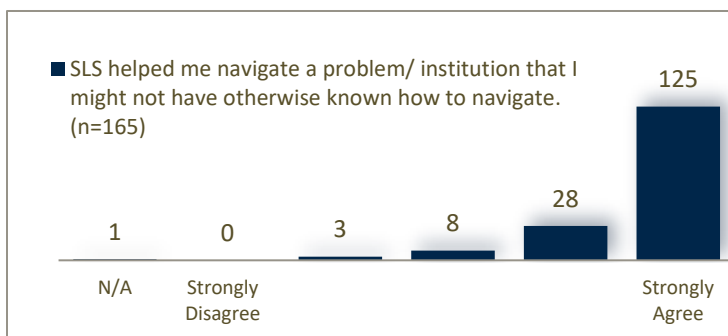
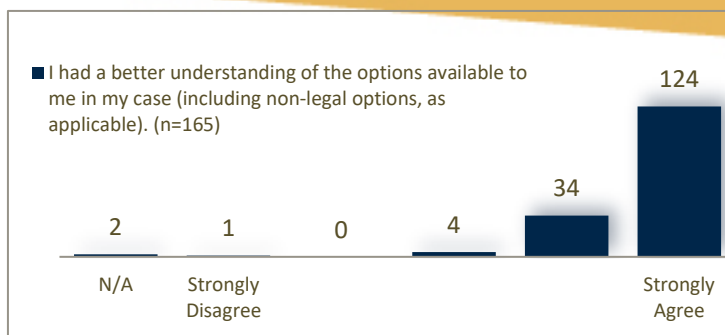
¹ To preserve attorney-client privilege and protect the confidentiality of SLS clients, the survey was administered solely by the Director of SLS, Mark Lucia, through a private account. All survey results are aggregated and presented without link to any identifying information of respondents. Survey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

95.8% of clients agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of their options after consulting with SLS, and **95.7%** agreed or strongly agreed they knew the first "next step" to take. Illustrative comments included:

- I found 3 solutions, not just one!
- I understood my rights, obligations, and options, when previously I basically had no idea.
- SLS allowed me to truly understand my options available to me. This took out a lot of anxiety about the issue.
- My housemates and I are corresponding with landlord about next steps. I have gone to two appointments with Mark and he's been essential to us knowing what to do and how to handle the situation.
- I felt more confident in my knowledge and felt as though I had more leverage than I thought I had previously.
- Mark gave me options that I didn't know I had. He laid out a timeline of what could happen and I appreciated that so much.
- My knowledge improved dramatically, to a point where in just a few minutes I was given multiple different solutions to my concerns.
- I know what my options are, as well as my rights, and I know that I am able to easily speak with campus legal services about my problems. Mark was incredibly helpful and informative.
- I was able to confront my landlord with a clear understanding of my rights, and the ability to cite a legal opinion which helped in the negotiation.
- SLS allowed me to evaluate some options I had not considered before meeting SLS.



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.

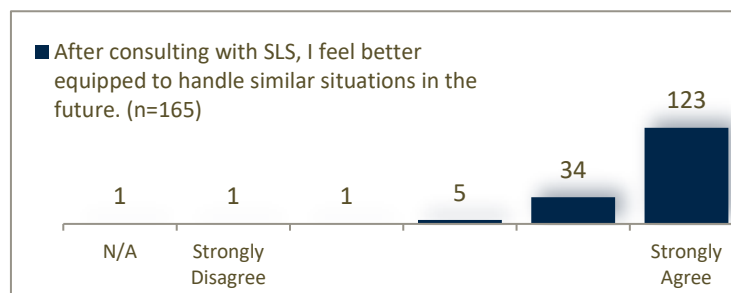
Students are often unfamiliar with legal matters, so SLS helps them work through a new form of problem or bureaucracy. **92.7%** agreed or strongly agreed that SLS helped them navigate an issue or institution they might not have otherwise known how to navigate:

- I went to court and did exactly what the SLS advisor told me to do, and it ended up being what he told me it would be. Nothing was a surprise and I wasn't scared because I knew what to expect.
- I sent a letter to a collections company, created with the help of SLS, and they finally left me alone!
- I didn't know anything about small claims court in California or its characteristics before my consultation.
- Mark guided us through the process of writing and sending a demand letter. When the defendant didn't respond to our letter, Mark then helped us with the small claims paperwork and filing/serving process, and then eventually with preparing evidence before we went to small claims court.
- Without his services, I wouldn't have had any idea about how to navigate the situations I was in.
- It helped to know what is useful and supports my case - documentation mainly - and how to achieve it.
- I was able to follow up with my landlord and all appropriate agencies and organizations to ensure complete legal protection.

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. **95.2%** of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that their work with SLS helped prepare them for similar future situations:

- I am more informed about my rights as a California tenant, and that will serve me for the rest of my life.
- The simple fact that my landlord now knows that I know my rights as a tenant has dramatically changed the nature of my interactions with him - he takes me more seriously when I raise issues.
- I definitely feel like I could apply the same process to a different, unrelated case!
- Watching Mark navigate the City of Berkeley ordinances showed me what to look for when dealing with future issues. I am no expert, but I think I have a better idea of how to consolidate information and make decisions in similar situations.
- I am now aware of all the possible violations a landlord can commit. I know the process of how to deal with uninhabitable living conditions and unresponsive landlords.
- I hope I don't have to deal with a similar issue again, but I understand the law better and feel better equipped.
- I have taken steps to avoid ever getting into the situation I found myself in, which Mark helped me do.
- I now know to document everything and to state reasons for legal action clearly and factually. I know that the first step in small claims is to try to settle it outside of court, and that actually being clear that you intend to go to court can be very effective.



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 success by helping students focus on school priorities, and limiting the potential distraction created by legal matters. **91.3%** of clients agreed or strongly agreed that the legal issue they brought to SLS **was causing them stress**, **81.8%** agreed or strongly agreed that it was **distracting them from their studies**, and **14.3%** agreed or strongly agreed that **without legal help they would have considered leaving school**. Of those students who agreed with the first statement above, **85.0%** 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**. One reason this matters is that 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 **83.5%** of all 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:

- I had a housing issue that literally demolished my ability to focus on anything related to schoolwork. Mark's benefit was ultimately not a legal benefit, but a psychological and emotional one. It helped me focus on my studies and get myself together.
- I got a clear vision of what I can do to stay in the school, and took steps that will help me in the future.
- SLS gave me peace of mind and confidence. It also made me feel like I was not alone.
- I didn't have to worry about being cold and sleeping poorly.
- My entire building was facing a forced eviction. The building was rent controlled and I don't know how I could have stayed in the area if I was evicted.

- I had gone for weeks without a full night of rest during the busiest periods in the semester. My academic performance suffered. The stress of repeatedly raising the issue and not feeling heard started to weigh on me. Mark's help lifted a really heavy load off my shoulders.
- I went from severe distress to a level of confidence that the situation can be resolved.
- I was stressed about my living situation and couldn't focus on anything else because I wasn't sure if I wouldn't have a home to come back to. As soon as I got help from the SLS I was reassured and empowered and went back to normal work and study life.
- I definitely felt far less anxious and was able to get concrete information to handle the issue which made me feel much better about the situation and allowed me to focus on work and other important school-related things.
- SLS helped us to understand that law is there to ensure things are done in a just, correct fashion, and that even though we are immigrants, we have rights in this sometimes hostile country.
- Having a conversation with Mark allowed me to put my mind at ease and get back to the important things-- like school. I felt a thousand times better. Thank you!

Student financial support and recovery

SLS also helps students financially: 31.2% 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 \$100 to \$16,000, and averaged \$3,286.**

Student satisfaction with service and sense of connection with the University

Client satisfaction levels with SLS are very high. **98.2%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “SLS is a worthwhile/beneficial service” (with **95.7% strongly agreeing**), and **98.8%** agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend SLS to other students in need of assistance (with **95.7% strongly agreeing**).

70.7% of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience with SLS, **they feel more connected to the University.** Another **89.2%** agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience with SLS, **they are more aware of resources available at the University.** Overall, **98.8%** were satisfied or very satisfied with SLS (93.8% being very satisfied). Comments included:

- I really felt that Mark wanted to help, WAS a huge help, and has my/the students' best interests at heart. That means a lot when dealing with stressful and new situations like these, on top of the demands of school and work.
- Every time I came to SLS, they answered my questions accurately and had an incredibly high level of service. Mark is an amazing individual and I gained a lot of comfort and peace of mind from our consultations.
- Extremely patient, informative, available, resourceful! I wouldn't have known where to begin and I really appreciate having this resource. I have had to use SLS twice this year and am so grateful for Mark's advice!
- I really liked how Mark Lucia helped me to manage my case. He was very responsive via email, as well as clear, supportive, and welcoming during our meetings.
- Mark was accessible over email, which helped us student-athletes a lot, as we do not have the time on our hands to schedule several appointments a week with him.
- Mark was kind, helpful, personable, and professional. He got straight to the point with us and was so nice during a time when we were freaking out.
- Mark was very knowledgeable. I practiced law for about ten years prior to this (though I know nothing about landlord-tenant), so I know what good legal help looks like. I was impressed.
- Mark was the first time I felt listened to. Although our meeting had a time limit, he didn't rush me at all and allowed me to not only ask the legal questions but also to vent about how they were impacting my quality of life.
- SLS was nonjudgmental, supportive, and well-informed.
- Before consulting with SLS, I thought my case was completely lost. With Mark's letter and advice, I got all the money I needed back from my landlord.

- Mark Lucia was incredibly supportive during the entire process. It made me feel very valued and validated that he remembered our entire situation over a 5-month long process and was diligent about taking notes during our meetings.
- Mark's advice was always spot-on and realistic regarding what we could ask for versus the likely outcome of the case. He was very knowledgeable about the landlord/tenant issues I needed advice on. I saved a TON of money by consulting with an actual attorney with the SLS.
- Mark Lucia is a great asset to SLS and students. His demeanor and attention to detail are extremely important as legal issues can be stressful.
- Mark Lucia was kind, approachable, and very helpful. I could tell he really enjoyed his work and I really appreciated that. I could not thank him enough (or recommend his services enough!)
- Mark is always extremely responsive, willing to meet and advise, and provides useful strategies/tips/information. SLS is definitely one of the best resources and I feel very fortunate to have this resource!
- Mark was really positive, engaged, and interested in me and my issue, which helped me talk about it and make progress.
- Mark went over and above what I was expecting to make sure that I had all the information I needed. I feel like I can ask him anything.
- SLS is an incredibly valuable service on campus that pretty much saved my wellbeing this semester. The value of this service really cannot be overstated. Thank you so much, Mark!

Areas for improvement

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

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