

# Student Legal Services

## 2013-14 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, 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 **857 client consultations in 2013-14** (up from 842 in 2012-13) to help students resolve legal issues and to foster the student learning outcomes described below.

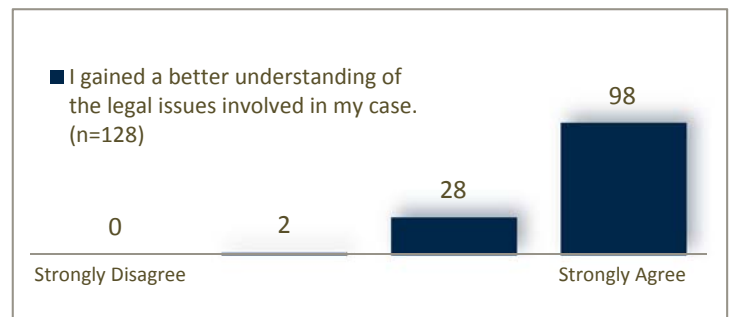
SLS conducted two client surveys (Dec. 2013 and May 2014) to assess four learning outcomes and satisfaction with the service. The survey went to 378 SLS clients with a valid email address on file.<sup>1</sup> The response rate was 33.9%.

### Learning Outcome Assessment Results

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

Student clients widely (**98.5%**) 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 found out which avenues of approach would be maximally effective in resolving my issues.
- I now know my rights as a tenant.
- SLS helped me understand my rights and what options I have moving forward.
- I knew nothing when I walked in the office, and I left confident and knowledgeable.
- Had I not consulted with SLS, I would have misunderstood the nature of the claim I was pursuing.
- The consultation gave me confidence and crucial information.
- Mark spent a lot of time with me going over all the details and helped me prepare for the filing of my case. It was extremely helpful.
- Got more information about what could happen; helped me formulate a plan moving forward.
- I had more confidence that what I was doing was correct, legally.
- I became aware of the formal demand requirements that I needed to fulfill before taking legal action.
- I am more confident of how to file a response to an unlawful detainer, as well as proper form of service.
- SLS explained my options and taught me what subpoena powers the court and parties have.

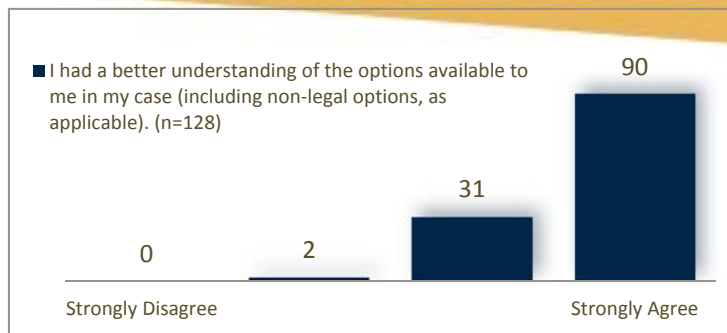


<sup>1</sup> To preserve attorney-client privilege and protect the confidentiality of SLS clients, the survey was administered solely by the Director of SLS, Mark Lucia, through a private account. All survey results are aggregated and presented without link to any identifying information of respondents.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

## 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 directly represent students, so it's crucial that they understand the next step(s) to address their legal issues. Clients almost universally (**94.5%**) agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of their options after consulting with SLS, and **96.8%** agreed or strongly agreed they knew the first "next step" to take in their case. Illustrative responses included:

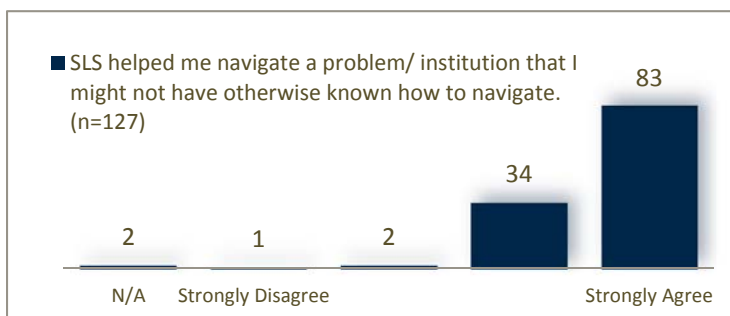
- I was given a set of procedures to follow that led to the dismissal of my charges.
- Mr. Lucia was extremely helpful, patient and thorough in explaining my rights as well as the different paths to resolution.
- I did not know where to begin with my case. SLS explained everything that I should do and gave me reference material so I could be fully informed. It helped me plan for what I needed to do.
- After hearing the pros and cons of each strategy, we found a much better solution by consulting SLS.
- After consulting with Mr. Lucia I had a better understanding of my rights and possible routes of action.
- Mark is really good at giving me the big picture and helping me see the different outcomes.
- I did not even know some of the options existed. It greatly helped.
- I actually understand I can resolve the issue outside the court.
- I went from no knowledge to extensive knowledge of my options and the possible outcomes.



## 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 typically unfamiliar with legal matters, so SLS often helps them work through a problem or bureaucracy that's new to them. **92.2%** agreed or strongly agreed that SLS helped them navigate an issue or institution that they might not otherwise have known how to navigate:

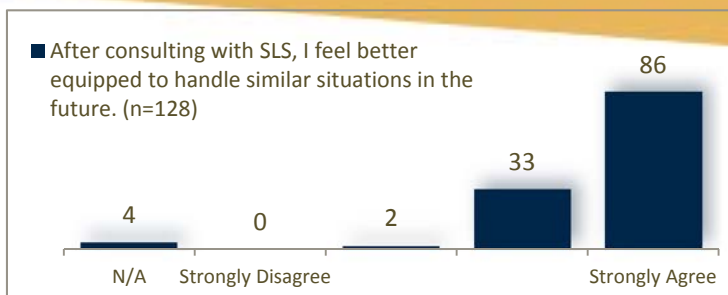
- I have a better understanding of my rights as a tenant in Berkeley, as well as the resources available within the East Bay Area when dealing with landlord tenant disputes.
- I understood the process I was going through and how the legal system worked in my situation.
- I understood better how to make an offer to the insurance company as well as to recognize the advantages and disadvantages of Small Claims Court as well regular court options.
- I learned I could write a demand letter to assert my legal rights. SLS was a huge help drafting that letter.
- I filed a response to an unlawful detainer. I also learned about what options I had, such as a motion to quash the case for improper service of the unlawful detainer. I also learned about other resources.
- I could have gotten into some serious trouble for myself if I went in to face the judge without Mark's help. But, I went forward with an option he told me about and it made the process SO MUCH BETTER!
- The case proved to be complex and Mark was essential in helping untangle the different moving parts.



## 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. Most **(93.0%)** SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that their work with SLS helped prepare them for similar future situations:

- I better understand a variety of court proceedings, and the probability of different outcomes.
- I am more informed for the steps to take immediately after a similar incident.
- I have a stronger sense of how to fill out paper work properly as well as the required steps to take on either end of this situation.
- This may sound humorous, but I will no longer put up with "slum lords." I feel like I have new strength and power as a tenant.
- I have the resources to do what I need to do to handle this, or help someone else in a similar situation.
- I now know that I am able to negotiate with the insurance company as well as how to approach related subrogation claims.
- I have encountered students with similar situations such as mine and was able to relate my situation and advise them to seek legal advice with the SLS.



## 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 providing counseling and assistance that enable students to focus on school priorities and limit the potential distraction created by legal matters. **96.0%** agreed or strongly agreed that the legal issue they brought to SLS **was causing them stress**, **77.8%** agreed or strongly agreed that it was **distracting them from their studies**, and **22.2%** agreed or strongly agreed that **without legal help they would have considered leaving school**. Of those students who agreed with the latter two statements, **90.1%** 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 particularly important given that students from underrepresented ethnic minority (UREM) groups and lower-income families consult with SLS in **much higher numbers** than their representation in the overall student population, and that **81.8%** 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:

- It relieved a huge amount of stress that was completely distracting me from my school and lab work.
- I actually felt so despondent at some point that I told a friend I'd rather just give up on grad school and move back to my home country. Mark could not have been more helpful. He was extremely constructive, rational, and well-informed. It turned out that I had much better options than I realized.
- We went into the meeting stressed about our situation, and after talking with Mark we felt much more comfortable knowing we had someone on our side.
- I was so stressed I had to be checked in to the hospital. My psychiatrist suggested I seek legal counsel to reduce some of my anxiety. Once I spoke to Mark I became clear about the facts and was able to calm down. SLS helped me to continue the semester and finish as best as I could under the circumstances.
- I got quick and strategic advice on impending crises, which was a lifesaver.
- SLS is vital to health of the UC Berkeley Student.
- SLS significantly helped me perform better this semester by alleviating stress associated with my issue.

## Student financial support and recovery

**SLS also helps students financially:** 34.1% of respondents recovered money that they would not have otherwise collected without the help of SLS. Twenty-two students specified amounts they actually recovered or saved with SLS assistance (several matters were still pending); **these amounts ranged from \$50 to \$3,720, and averaged \$1,045.**

## Student satisfaction with service and sense of connection with the University

Client satisfaction levels with SLS are very high. **99.2%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “SLS is a worthwhile/beneficial service” (with **96.0% strongly agreeing**), and **99.2%** agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend SLS to other students in need of assistance (with **94.5% strongly agreeing**).

**80.1%** of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience with SLS, **they feel more connected to the University**. Another **92.9%** agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience with SLS, **they are more aware of resources available at the University**. Overall, **99.2%** were satisfied or very satisfied with SLS (90.5% being very satisfied). Comments included:

- The advice, knowledge and comfort I gained from meeting with SLS was extremely helpful. Thank you!
- Was great having this service - really helped with my stress and anxiety and helped solve the problem.
- Mark's kind, nonjudgmental attitude made me feel comfortable in what could have been a very uncomfortable situation.
- Mark has been a HUGE help to me get out of and manage bad landlord experiences. He has gone above and beyond to help me out.
- It put my mind at ease - not only did I have support from someone knowledgeable, but I had an action plan. And eventually the problem got resolved in my favor, which I never expected at the beginning.
- Mark was extremely helpful, and really cared about doing his best to help me resolve my case. All of my questions were answered as a result of consulting with SLS.
- Timely, patient, good listener. Overall a great experience.
- Very supportive, knowledgeable, and a good sense of humor. Humor goes a long way when you're worried and stressed. It makes such a positive impact on one's life to have the support of someone so kind-hearted.
- Mark is very patient and understanding. He is a good listener, and he is respectful. He helps make me feel "heard", and sometimes that is even more important than the good advice he gives!
- SLS provided an environment in which I felt comfortable sharing my issue. Mark listened carefully and provided thoughtful, specific advice. His suggestions proved to be extremely useful to me.
- Mark Lucia was incredibly helpful, supportive and intelligent. He provided help in a very quick and timely manner, and given the acute nature of legal issues, this was extremely valuable.
- I think Student Legal Services is necessary at UC Berkeley. Students need it.
- Mark Lucia is extremely approachable and attentive. He sorted through the facts carefully. I strongly recommend his services to other students who are in need. He is also an inspiration for students interested in advocacy.
- Simply observing Mark talk through and research the questions I presented him with gave me a better impression of how lawyers approach legal issues.
- The entire Student Legal Services center encompassed a friendly, positive environment.
- I believe Mr. Lucia is one of the kindest and most professional persons I have met on campus.

## Areas for improvement

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

- More publicity/advertising of SLS.
- Shorter wait times for appointments (certain times of year – typically August-October and March-April – are impacted at SLS, and appointments can be delayed up to a week).
- Attorney representation and appearances in court on behalf of students, and additional local referrals.