

Student Legal Services

2016-17 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 **1,033 client consultations in 2016-17** (up from 972 in 2015-16) to help students resolve legal issues and to foster the student learning outcomes described below.

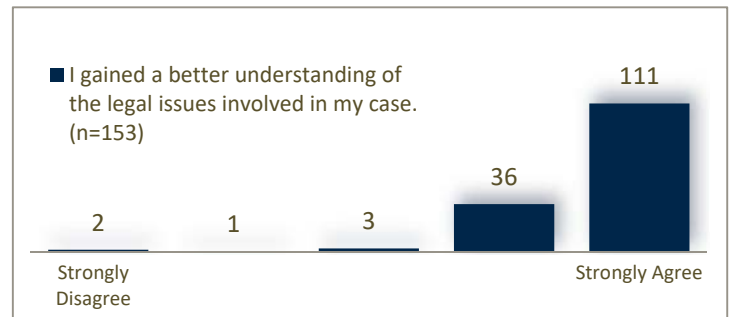
SLS conducted two client surveys (Dec. 2016 and May 2017) to assess four learning outcomes and satisfaction with the service. The survey went to 525 SLS clients with a valid email address on file.¹ The response rate was 29.3%.

Learning Outcome Assessment Results

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

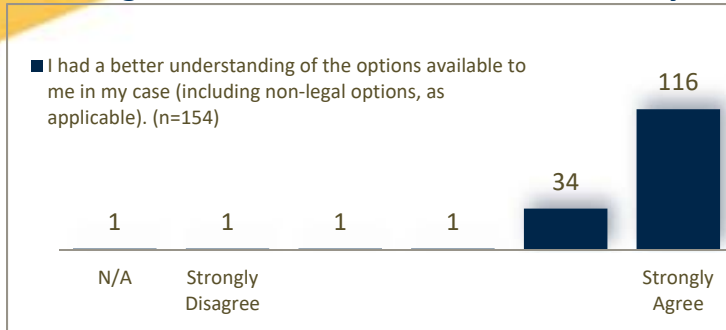
Almost all student clients (**95.4%**) agreed or strongly agreed that consulting with SLS improved their understanding of the legal issues related to their cases. Representative assessment responses included the following:

- I better understood my rights as a tenant and the ways my landlord violated California law.
- I had a much better understanding of how the negotiation process works with the insurance company, and how much to ask for.
- I was dealing with a difficult divorce and child custody situation, and Mark helped me understand specifically what legal rights (especially as a parent) that I had, so I could protect myself.
- I had no idea about my situation or what to do. After consulting, I had a clear idea about both of those issues.
- SLS changed my approach to the situation. I went in scared and confused, and having a clear understanding of my issue after meeting with Mark was empowering and helpful for both my well-being and to solve my issues.
- I understood the situation better, and was able to make an informed decision.
- I learned that I had important legal rights and a way to resolve my problem.
- I finally learned that I could do something to solve my problem! I wasn't sure if there was any hope, but Mark helped me understand my legal rights.
- I realized that my landlord was really thriving off of the fact that he assumed we didn't know our rights, and now I'm a lot more committed to going out of my way to learn those rights myself.
- I realized that I would be able to retain custody of my child, when my spouse was threatening otherwise.



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.



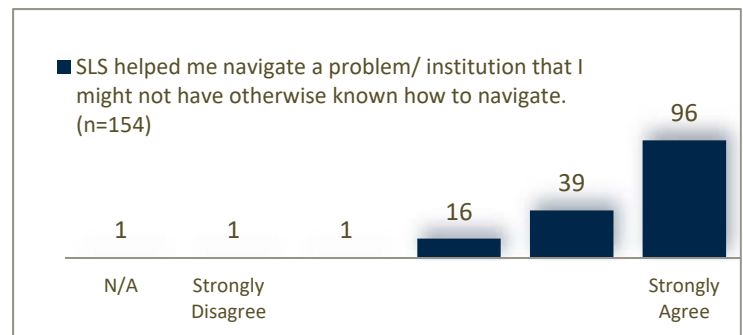
SLS does not represent students, so it's important that they understand the next step(s) to address their legal issues. **97.4%** of clients agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of their options after consulting with SLS, and **98.0%** agreed or strongly agreed they knew the first "next step" to take. Illustrative comments included:

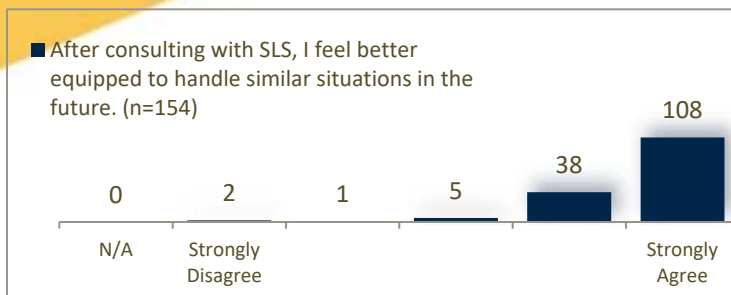
- I knew how to proceed with my case, and the likely outcomes.
- SLS helped me better understand and evaluate the legal risks and liabilities of my situation and helped put my worries at ease/prioritize risks. I had a lot of questions, and Mark was able to answer them all.
- Mr. Lucia explained my options and offered me lots of viable resources that I could use. He gave me a lot of confidence and helped me understand my situation.
- I was able to understand the implications of following different paths with respect to my case
- I understood the pros and cons of going to small claims court.
- By citing law, Mark gave me awareness of my rights, and walked me through potential if/then scenarios.
- Mark gave me suggestions that I hadn't thought of before.
- I learned I had the option to terminate my lease for legal cause, which I didn't know about before. That really opened my eyes to seeing I had more options to take action over my housing situation.
- I thought I had no options - with SLS, I realized I had many. I felt much more informed and on firmer footing.
- My options were clearly articulated by Mark, so I had a much clearer understanding/awareness after the meeting. I was able to make an informed decision about my next step because of this new awareness.

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. **87.7%** agreed or strongly agreed that SLS helped them navigate an issue or institution they might not have known how to navigate:

- With SLS, I felt confident to tackle my issue. Mark calmly explained everything and my options.
- Mr. Lucia not only made me much more confident filing the papers with the court (explaining terms, anticipating what the judge would want to see, thinking through potential problems), but also saved me \$400+ by suggesting a fee waiver filing. Thank you!
- I understood the legal procedure involving my specific case as well as recommendations for next steps, and why those were good steps.
- Mark gave me a very clear understanding of what to expect, and the rules of small claims court.
- Talking with Mark was great! I came with some complicated documents and general confusion, and he helped clear everything up for me and helped me understand the contracts I was about to sign.
- I am not from the U.S., so Mr. Lucia helped me to deal with a legal environment I am not used to.
- I had very little idea of what was going to happen to me, and SLS helped break the process down, answer my questions, and give me a familiarity with the process.
- I have thought more critically about what kind of custody arrangement I want with my kids, and knowing what is "done" and possible, it helped prepare me for a specific and congenial conversation with my ex.





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. **94.7%** of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that their work with SLS helped prepare them for similar future situations:

- I now know what kind of language to use in a demand letter and how to negotiate with insurance.
- By being made aware of my rights, I will be better able to exercise them in the future.
- I feel much more confident in asserting my rights and know where to turn for help.
- I am more aware of resources available to me both on and off campus, and feel empowered to seek an attorney's advice or services in the future should I need them.
- I know options and resources that I/anyone else can take when faced in similar situations.
- I have a better idea of what signs to look for/what evidence to note and document if this situation arises again.
- If me or my friends are in a similar situation, I would advise them of how I handled the situation and that we have people like Mark who provide excellent legal services for students.
- I would know exactly how to handle a Small Claims Court case, and would know my legal rights.
- I now understand how workers compensation attorney's work and I know that would be an option if there was ever a similar situation in the future.

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. **94.8%** of clients 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 **12.5%** agreed or strongly agreed that **without legal help they would have considered leaving school**. Of those students who agreed with the first statement above, **89.5%** 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 **75.0%** 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:

- My legal issues were psychologically stressful to the point where I could not focus. Having a clear plan that I developed from my consultations with SLS helped me to feel like I could manage and move forward.
- I was dealing with a concussion and legal issues. It was overwhelming. SLS helped me get everything into order.
- Prior to meeting with SLS, I felt anxious about my legal issue because I just didn't know what to expect. Meeting with Mark relieved me of that anxiety and gave me confidence that I would be just fine.
- I solved my off-campus housing crisis. I hope I am accepted to grad school at Cal because now that I finally have housing, I feel I can begin to focus on my studies.
- In a stressful legal situation, all my energy was put towards resolving it. Once it was resolved I was able to return to my routine and devote time to my studies.
- I was spending inordinate time reading about the legal issue, rather than on my school work.

- I literally thought I might need to withdraw from school in order to protect my custody rights of my child, but talking with Mark opened up a new world of options for me.
- With SLS's help, I was able to stop worrying about what to do next or how to go about receiving reimbursement for an uninhabitable living situation and focus more on my studies, knowing that SLS had my back.
- I could not concentrate thinking about my issue. Knowing my options allowed me to be a student again.
- It relieved a tremendous amount of stress, and I no longer felt alone in trying to solve my problem.
- Before I went to SLS I had already withdrawn from school because my housing situation had forced me to. I can now return to school because SLS helped remove me from a bad situation.
- Knowing my options helped motivate me to finish my degree so I can move on to the next step.
- After discussing my situation and the options available, I felt as if a weight had been lifted. My situation is still not resolved, but I am not going to allow myself to be consumed by stress because of it.
- It was just a huge stress relief. The problem had really been weighing on my mind and distracting me from many important aspects of my life and studies.

Student financial support and recovery

SLS also helps students financially: 23.7% 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 \$300 to \$6,000, and averaged \$2,238.**

Student satisfaction with service and sense of connection with the University

Client satisfaction levels with SLS are very high. **98.7%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “SLS is a worthwhile/beneficial service” (with **94.1% strongly agreeing**), and **99.3%** agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend SLS to other students in need of assistance (with **96.0% strongly agreeing**).

75.0% of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience with SLS, **they feel more connected to the University.** Another **90.1%** agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience with SLS, **they are more aware of resources available at the University.** Overall, **98.7%** were satisfied or very satisfied with SLS (88.8% being very satisfied). Comments included:

- Mark was super helpful and supportive. I got the solutions I needed, and I recommend SLS to all my friends.
- Basically, SLS is one of the best services UC Berkeley has to offer. Mark Lucia is a true professional; he is knowledgeable and personable. I would recommend consulting with Mark to anyone.
- Mark is wonderful! Down-to-earth and personable guy! Sweetheart! A white guy who gets it! He knows his stuff and answered all and any questions. It's great!
- Mark was incredibly kind, empathic, and caring - also very knowledgeable and practical. I really needed that.
- I was incredibly impressed and grateful for the ability to exchange email with Mark in order to ask numerous follow up questions during the entire process. Mark was always very prompt and helpful.
- I received an appointment the same day I called. Mark was not only knowledgeable and helpful in a legal sense, but also very friendly and able to reduce my stress surrounding the situation.
- Everything was positive: ease of making an appointment, helpfulness of office staff, excellence of Mr. Lucia's advice, helpful follow-up email.
- Mark was very kind, understanding, and unbiased. It was a pleasure to talk to him, and to be reassured that there was merit to my case.
- The continuity that Mr. Lucia offered in my case, plus the sense that my campus cared about my horrifying situation, helped me gain the self-confidence to prevail and solve the outstanding issues.
- Extraordinarily courteous, respectful, professional, knowledgeable, and caring would only start to describe the services offered by this office.
- Mark is knowledgeable, welcoming, and quick to help. Not only did he help me understand my issue at a high level, he also provided me with concrete, detailed suggestions for how to proceed.

- Mark was available when needed and his advice and diligence in creating response samples was extremely helpful. He was comprehensive and available in person, over the phone and email whenever necessary.
- This is an amazing resource. I appreciate that Mark was able to give concrete advice on all aspects of the situation, without judgment or too much "hedging."
- Mark is an amazing legal counselor for the students. He carefully listened to me, walked me through all the possible scenarios, advised me on strategies, informed about all possible consequences and also comforted me. He was very realistic but he also gave positive energy in a way that was comforting.
- A short, free, accessible consultation saved me a lot of money and a lot of headache. It gave me more power as a student to be able to fight back. Because of it, I can live a much healthier and fulfilling life.
- Mark Lucia was clear and informative and reassuring. He was also very HUMAN in his interactions with me. I felt like I always had someone to turn to.
- Mark explained every step of the divorce process, from filing to custody to financial issues and spousal support. He did it in a way that was kind, non-judgmental, and compassionate. He was fantastic and I would go back to him with any legal issue any time.
- Information was relayed in a very warm, compassionate, and clear way. I felt very comfortable meeting with Mark! He was very professional, kind, and he was really listening to what I had to say.
- Mark himself is super empathetic and knowledgeable. He was positive and upbeat about paths forward while still addressing my concerns and not discounting my stress/anxiety.
- I really cannot thank you enough for your help. My baby's welfare is at stake, and because of your advice and generosity, I found a good lawyer and we have built a strong case for full custody.
- I cannot praise Mark Lucia enough. Of all the members of the UC Berkeley staff, I found him to be one of the most helpful and likable. UC Berkeley and SLS is lucky to have him.
- Thank you for being there for us students, Mr. Lucia! We appreciate your presence on campus, helping us and understanding how frustrating and isolating off-campus legal issues can sometimes be in Berkeley.
- Thank you so much! I seriously can't imagine the situation I'd be in without your advice. It has changed my life and is helping me tremendously.
- I think this resource is SO necessary for students particularly in the current political climate. Please keep this program alive!
- Thank you so much for this service. This is very much necessary at UC Berkeley and Mark is awesome!
- This is an invaluable benefit of being a Cal student. I don't know where I'd be without Mark and SLS help.
- SLS is fantastic! I really hope UC Berkeley can continue providing this resource to students.

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.
- Online appointment system.