

Student Legal Services

2017-18 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 **1,109 client consultations in 2017-18** (up from 1,033 in 2016-17) to help students resolve legal issues and to foster the student learning outcomes described below.

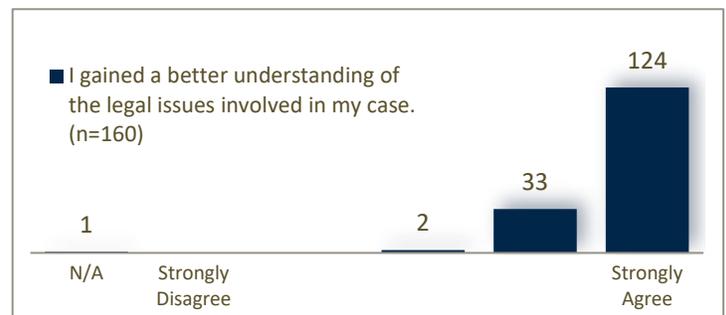
SLS conducted two client surveys (Dec. 2017 and May 2018) to assess four learning outcomes and satisfaction with the service. The survey went to 543 SLS clients with a valid email address on file.¹ The response rate was 29.5%.

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 (**98.1%**) 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:

- After consulting with SLS, I understood my rights and how to address my situation. I felt empowered knowing specific legislation regarding my legal issues and left SLS with tools to move forward.
- SLS helped me understand the legal issues regarding my dispute and helped me craft the winning arguments.
- After consulting with SLS I was clear about the law, and what rights I had. I felt confidence to assert myself with my landlord, and I had a great outcome.
- I was given a strong foundation and understanding for how the legal system works, and what legal strategies I could take in my defense.
- Mr. Lucia helped me confirm my legal suspicions involving my tenant/landlord dispute. He helped me figure out who exactly to file the lawsuit against and pointed me in the right direction on how to proceed.
- My issue was related to tenant rights. I have a much better understanding of my rights and the Oakland municipal code with respect to tenants.
- SLS helped me understand the legal situation with our housing, and where to find details about our protections.
- My knowledge drastically improved. SLS built my confidence and answered all relevant questions with additional insight into the topics discussed.

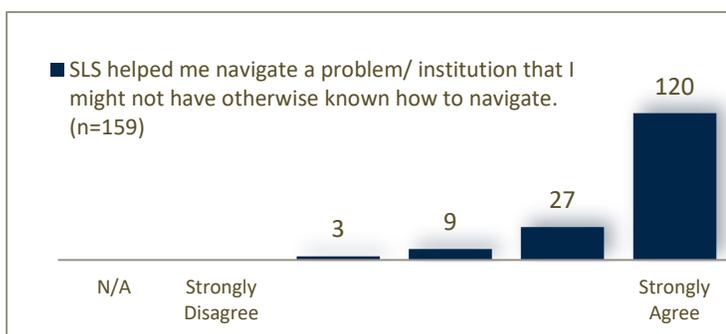
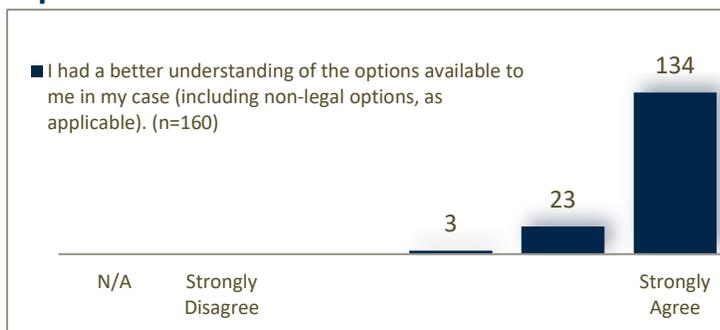


¹ To preserve attorney-client privilege and protect the confidentiality of SLS clients, the survey was administered solely by the Director of SLS, Mark Lucia, through a private account. All survey results are aggregated and presented without link to any identifying information of respondents. Survey 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. **98.1%** of clients agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of their options after consulting with SLS, and **95.6%** agreed or strongly agreed they knew the first "next step" to take. Illustrative comments included:

- I had no idea what settling out of court would look like or how to even approach the involved parties about the issue. Mark talked me through several alternatives so we could decide on the best one for my situation.
- I learned what legal action was likely, what legal actions I could take, and what all my options were.
- SLS definitely provided me more options as I feel like I have very little knowledge about the laws and my RIGHTS!
- Mark went over pros and cons and a variety of scenarios for my options. I came in to the meeting upset, and left feeling like I had some good options.
- I got to know that I actually have different options, when before that I thought I had no other choices.
- I was made aware of options that I hadn't even considered.
- I was pretty sure that my situation was illegal, though I still wasn't certain exactly on what grounds I would argue that. After my consultation I could pinpoint the exact violations.
- I had no idea so many options were available to me.
- I learned what routes I could take. I understood what level of risk was attached to each option.



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.

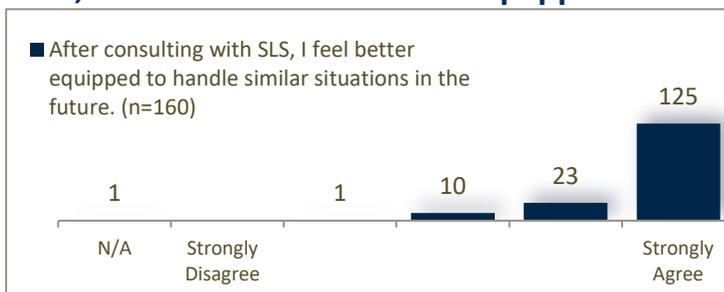
Students are often unfamiliar with legal matters, so SLS helps them work through a new form of problem or bureaucracy. **92.5%** agreed or strongly agreed that SLS helped them navigate an issue or institution they might not have otherwise known how to navigate:

- I now know how to effectively file and serve a small claims case.
- Now I know the whole procedure to handle a similar case. At least I know the steps and what to do now.
- I am now very confident in my understanding regarding housing, rent, roommates, etc.
- I am much more aware of when leasing corporations are being unreasonable and when to be firm with my rights as a tenant. I now take the time to make sure that any representing agent of a corporation is responsible in the processing of legal documents.
- I now make sure to ask for documentation for my own protection. Having Mark as our coach throughout this conflict also made me more confident in dealing with people who are uncooperative and conveying myself with professionalism in small claims court.
- This process has been a great learning experience for me because prior to this, I had minimal to no experience with legal matters, so with Mr. Lucia's constant assistance, I have learned that I have options.
- I was lost, and after meeting with SLS, I felt like I was equipped with the knowledge to move forward productively.

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. **92.5%** of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that their work with SLS helped prepare them for similar future situations:

- I have a ranked list of options to pursue should an incident occur again.
- I know that there are multiple ways to resolve a situation, including options that do not involve legal action.
- I think I would be able to help someone else if the person is put in the same situation (at least a little bit) because I got so much information from Mr. Lucia.
- I do not feel intimidated by situations like these any longer, since domestic violence situations are often perpetuated by fear. I know what to do.
- I feel I have been equipped with knowledge that I can refer back to later. Plus, Mark provided me advice on how to prevent this from happening again.
- I know now exactly what steps I should take to handle this sort of situation, thanks to the very friendly and helpful people at the SLS.
- Well, hopefully you only get divorced once, but should this ever happen to me again I now know what to do!
- I am better equipped because I understand the laws and my options better. I no longer feel like I am treading completely unknown water.
- I can tell my friends what to do if they find themselves in the same or similar situation as me.
- I know the exact labor codes that dictate certain rules of employment in California. This should serve me in any job, as I will know how to report and what to expect if a future employer engages in illegal behavior.
- I know how to appropriately approach the issue of custody, and what my rights as a mother are, and how to put my son's best interest first.



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. **94.8%** of clients agreed or strongly agreed that the legal issue they brought to SLS **was causing them stress**, **78.4%** agreed or strongly agreed that it was **distracting them from their studies**, and **15.6%** agreed or strongly agreed that **without legal help they would have considered leaving school**. Of those students who agreed with the first statement above, **89.2%** 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 **79.5%** 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 was more empowered, better equipped, with additional knowledge of the legal space related to the topics discussed. I formed legal documents, submitting paperwork, and had meaningful and engaging discussion related to the topic with the interested parties.
- SLS made me feel more confident, like I wasn't powerless.
- I felt overwhelmed and powerless thinking I was stuck in my situation, but Mark helped me find a way to get out of a bad predicament. I don't think I would have survived Berkeley without the help of Mark.

- I was very worried about my troubles before I received assistance from SLS, from Mark specifically. And after consulting him, I knew that the situation was not that bad. Mark really relieved me from worry and nervousness.
- Just being able to move forward in resolving the problem helped get me back to studying faster.
- It relieved my stress, so I was able to refocus on my academics.
- With the help of SLS I was able to recover money I really needed, which relieved a huge amount of stress for me.
- Advice from Mr. Lucia really helped me eliminate my unnecessary emotions and concentrate on my studies.
- Reduced my financial hardship.
- Without worrying about housing I was able to spend more time in class without being distracted by thoughts regarding what my housing condition might be when I returned home.
- I was in a really bad living situation and it was impacting my grades and my health. Once I moved out I was able to concentrate better.
- I definitely was able to move on with my life and dedicate my efforts to schoolwork as opposed to legal research and was also given concrete options that were reasonable to pursue in given my case which made the process so much easier and seamless and led to a MUCH quicker resolution!
- My focus on studies improved as I had a detailed course of action, instead of sacrificing study time on it.
- This service was invaluable for me. I have no idea what I would have done without it. So helpful and knowledgeable. Took a huge amount of stress off my shoulders. Thank you!

Student financial support and recovery

SLS also helps students financially: 30.9% 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 \$475 to \$5,480, and averaged \$1,755.**

Student satisfaction with service and sense of connection with the University

Client satisfaction levels with SLS are very high. **100%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “SLS is a worthwhile/beneficial service” (with **94.4% strongly agreeing**), and **100%** agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend SLS to other students in need of assistance (with **92.1% strongly agreeing**).

75.4% of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience with SLS, **they feel more connected to the University.** Another **89.0%** agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience with SLS, **they are more aware of resources available at the University.** Overall, **98.7%** were satisfied or very satisfied with SLS (92.1% being very satisfied). Comments included:

- Mark helped me through every step of the way, offering me solutions and giving me realistic outcomes.
- Mark was so helpful. I felt safe and I felt like the University had my best interests in mind.
- Without SLS, I would have accepted a terrible (and illegal) housing situation just because of ignorance in law.
- Mark is just absolutely amazing!!!! He provided guidance and support as I navigated a very difficult situation. He is worth so much and Berkeley should feel so honored and grateful to have him!!!
- Every time after I talked with the legal advisor, I felt better and had more time to study.
- Mark is very knowledgeable and provided excellent consulting service. He cares about students, which is very important. He also responds to inquiries via email, which is super nice.
- I felt the attorney was there to help me; he was understanding and on my side
- Mark was extremely thorough in going over any questions or concerns I had. He spent time writing out how to approach my situation and sent me additional resource material.
- The lawyer I met with was extremely generous with his time, and he really seemed to care that I be informed and empowered. He was warm and supportive without making any undue promises.
- Mark is very kind and helpful. He is also patient to listen and willing to put effort in helping students.
- Mark made me feel comfortable and was very open and knowledgeable when answering all of my questions. I am very thankful to have had this service available to me as a student parent.

- I would have been robbed of over \$5,000 had I not had SLS guidance. I would not have had the money to hire an outside attorney for consultation. Words cannot express the gratitude of me and my roommates.
- Mark really listened and was very engaged in understanding my problem and helping me solve it. Thank you!
- It meant a lot to me that SLS rep took my problem seriously. I had worried that my issue wouldn't qualify for taking up their time, but they treated me with respect and clearly made a lot of effort to help me.
- SLS provides a service that low-income students might not otherwise be able to have access to.
- Mark was always very precise and very patient; it would have been impossible to navigate those issues and processes without help, and it would be too expensive to hire a lawyer for these consultations.
- Mark was comforting, asked a lot of questions, and made me feel like I had power in a fight with my landlord.
- Mark was incredibly welcoming and understanding. I felt comfortable giving him all the details of my case and trusting him with providing me with appropriate advice.
- Mark! Talking to him is absolutely amazing. He was professional, calm, and an overall great person.
- I felt supported by Mark. He went above and beyond in personally helping me write a letter to the leasing company of my apartment building. He appeared to genuinely care, and was a good listener and problem-solver.
- The legal counsel was extremely informative and helpful. I felt like he actually cared about my case, he was attentive, took extensive notes, and made me feel welcome.
- Thank you very much for the help and support! I greatly appreciate it and you really made my life easier!!
- Mark is excellent and helpful. He empowers, educates, and counsels with intelligence, integrity, and good intention.
- I was SO grateful for Mark's willingness to help, and for his sound legal counsel. I hope SLS always continues at Berkeley. It's comforting to know as a student, I have someone to turn to.
- Mark is such a wonderful person! Not only does he have legal knowledge, he also happens to be a genuinely kind human. This was my third time visiting him since I transferred here. Your services will be missed once I graduate.
- Mark, you're a lifesaver. Thank you so much. You have helped me and my roommates tremendously.
- SLS is an essential service for students.
- SLS is one of the most well-oiled machines on campus and perhaps the most accessible, resourceful, and supportive service I have experiences at Cal.

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. **(This suggestion was implemented by SLS in May 2018.)**