

# Student Legal Services

## 2020-21 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 **1,398 client consultations in 2020-21** (up from 1,335 in 2018-19) to help students resolve legal issues and to foster the student learning outcomes described below.

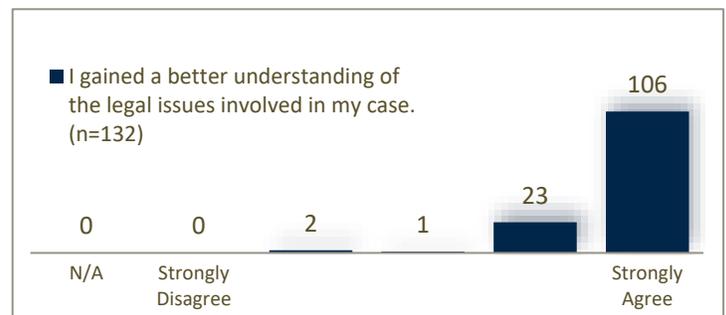
SLS conducted two client surveys (Dec. 2020 and May 2021) to assess four learning outcomes and satisfaction with the service. The survey went to 591 SLS clients with a valid email address on file.<sup>1</sup> The response rate was 22.3%.

### 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 (**97.7%**) 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:

- To be honest, I had no idea what I was dealing with. SLS helped me understand the legal process and decide on next steps to take.
- I got a great explanation and legal advice regarding my issue. SLS helped me understand when I was completely in the dark.
- I knew after talking with Mark that I had legal rights which I was not aware of at all before our meeting.
- This is my first time dealing with this type of legal issue. I had no idea what I was doing but Mr. Lucia went above and beyond to make sure I understood the entire process.
- Mark clarified the next best steps and how to get me into a safe environment ASAP. Our initial conversation also gave me hope that everything would be okay. :)
- SLS confirmed most of what I had researched online, and really added a lot more detail than I was ever able to find on a google search!
- I learned the ins and outs of moving forward with a paternity test and parentage forms.
- Mark is awesome, he identified walked me through the specific components of the law which I was not fully aware of and expertly identified examples and options I could pursue based on my status.
- I was able to compose of a letter with specific legal language that tremendously aided me in removing myself and my family from a hazardous environment quickly and efficiently.

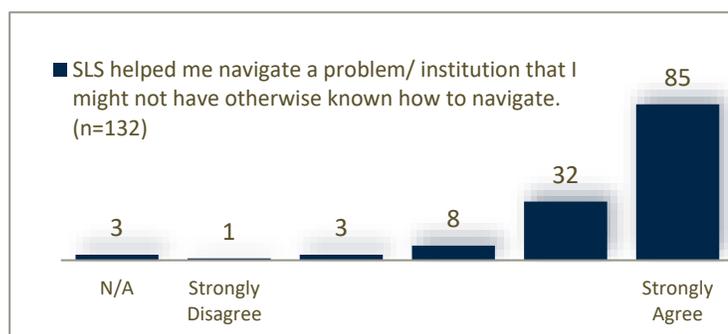
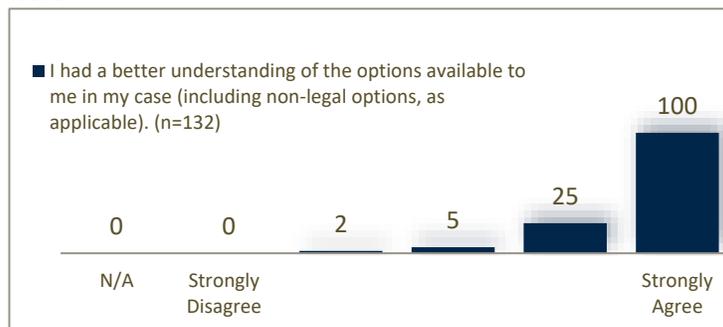


<sup>1</sup> To preserve attorney-client privilege and protect the confidentiality of SLS clients, the survey was administered solely by the Director of SLS, Mark Lucia, through a private account. All survey results are aggregated and presented without link to any identifying information of respondents. 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 represent students, so it's key that they know the next step(s) to address their legal issues. **94.7%** of clients agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of their options after consulting with SLS, and **96.2%** agreed or strongly agreed they knew the first "next step" to take. Illustrative comments included:

- I was not aware of legal options available to me and their chances of success. Mark clarified all of this to me and shared resources and advice on how best to navigate the issue to maximize my chances of success.
- It was very helpful that I was told about specific resources and specific places I could pursue different options (i.e. what division of Berkeley rent board to contact or where specifically to file a small claims case).
- I learned specifically how to deal with the issues as opposed to just having some general ideas.
- Mr. Lucia walked me through several different responses and paths that I could try to take.
- I really had no idea what to do, so SLS enabled me to directly apply what we discussed to my situation. I went to Small Claims Court on my own, provided evidence, and won my case.
- My awareness of options became very transparent with SLS. I hadn't known I had so many available to me, so this was very helpful insight.
- Mark made me aware of the full spectrum of legal options available to me from speaking with and providing an avenue to seek civil remediation all the way to educating me about filing court papers.



## 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.

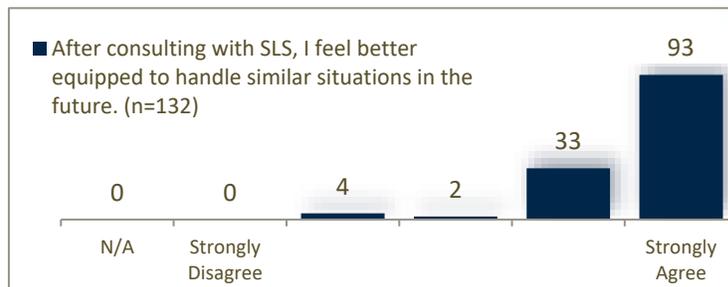
SLS helps students work through unfamiliar issues or bureaucracies. **88.6%** agreed or strongly agreed that SLS helped them navigate an issue or institution they might not have otherwise known how to navigate:

- In the future I will know better how to vet out landlords and ask the right questions about a lease to avoid being tricked into signing a lease with bad terms.
- I feel like I'm well educated in basic landlord tenant law now thanks to Mark, I've been able to help some friends with what I learned.
- I would be able to make a demand to a landlord in the future, and follow up with a Small Claims Court case if it were necessary.
- I consulted SLS with COVID tenant issues, and we SLS connected us to be very actively involved with the city council and helping the city's COVID tenant legislation. To me this was an invaluable experience.
- I know not to let companies walk all over me because of my background and I also learned to always have someone else read my legal documents before I sign them.
- I knew nothing about this beforehand, but I was able to navigate my entire house out our lease situation smoothly and legally by working with my landlord and the law.

## 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. **95.5%** of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that their work with SLS helped prepare them for similar future situations:

- I've been able to help friends and I now work with a property management company, where one of my responsibilities in ensuring compliance with landlord-tenant law.
- I think I have a much better idea of the specific type of language to look for in housing contracts.
- I absolutely feel prepared should I ever need to face the same issue again. I have no doubt I could handle a problem like this again if it arose.
- SLS taught me a very real life skill that is the element of surprise, especially when you know you are in the right and have proof of it. I also applied the ability to investigate local laws.
- Next time I will take more pictures, communicate with my landlord, and be more cautious about who to sign a lease with.
- I am certainly more aware of my rights as a result of this engagement. I feel more informed of legal avenues available to me in case of future disputes.



## 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. **96.2%** of clients agreed or strongly agreed that the legal issue they brought to SLS **was causing them stress**, **77.9%** agreed or strongly agreed that it was **distracting them from their studies**, and **15.2%** agreed or strongly agreed that **without legal help they would have considered leaving school**.

Of those students who agreed with the first statement above, **86.6%** 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 historically consult with SLS in **much higher numbers** than their representation in the overall student population, and **84.7%** of all respondents said that if not for SLS, they would have no access to legal counseling.

In addition, among all SLS clients in 2020-21, **5.7%** were encountering severe financial distress, **4.8%** were dealing with housing insecurity or significant habitability problems, and **4.1%** were at risk of potential violence and/or targets of harm.

Student comments describe the many ways SLS offers support for inclusion, retention and academic success:

- Mark gave me hope not just that my living situation would get better, but that I had an entire community behind me with support, even if they were remote.

- SLS guided me and I felt good knowing I was following the advice of a reputable attorney. I had the courage to pursue matters thanks to SLS....I didn't feel as scared, knowing I had rights to move forward.
- SLS allowed me to focus on my studies and not stress out over breaking any laws. I had suffered a mild heart attack before seeking a consultation with SLS from all the stress. I wish that I had gone to SLS sooner.
- I literally could not do my work before I talked to SLS. SLS helped me figure out next options and charted a path forward, so I could spend the rest of my time concentrating on my work.
- I felt calm and less stressed after being informed by trustworthy SLS folks. My experience with SLS allowed me to continue my education not only as an undergraduate at Cal, but for my future endeavors.
- I was able not to worry about money.
- I felt like I didn't have to carry this entire load on my own. I also didn't have to research much because all the resources I needed were provided to me.
- Before speaking with SLS, I couldn't sleep, and I worried all the time. I couldn't focus in class thinking about the legal issue and felt awful seeing how it was impeding my ability to learn and be more present in my classes and engage with peers more. Thankfully I persisted, asked for help, and found SLS.
- SLS helped keep me sane and understand my options.
- Getting help from SLS really made all the difference for me, both personally and in terms of my progress in school. Thank you for all of the help.
- I was able to stop worrying about the financial burden involved in my dispute, which allowed me to focus more on academics.
- I sincerely appreciate how reassuring and easygoing the process felt, despite it being a serious matter.

### Student financial support and recovery

**SLS also helps students financially:** 38.5% 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 \$50 to \$40,000, and averaged \$3,469.**

### 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 **96.1% strongly agreeing**), and **99.2%** agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend SLS to other students in need of assistance (with **93.5% strongly agreeing**).

**82.8%** of SLS clients agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience with SLS, **they feel more connected to the University**. Another **90.5%** agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience with SLS, **they are more aware of resources available at the University**. Overall, **98.4%** were satisfied or very satisfied with SLS (90.6% being very satisfied). Comments included:

- Thanks UC Berkeley for having resources like this for low income students. Mr. Lucia is super professional, and kind.
- Mark is great: knowledgeable, patient, open, and willing to explain things on your level. I've learned so much from him in the few times I've used his services over the last few years, and am eternally grateful.
- Mark is incredible. Actually gives real advice rather than skirting everything behind "get a lawyer." Super easy to talk to, only heard good things about him before i visited and only have good things to say.
- Mr. Lucia was incredibly knowledgeable, but even more so, he was compassionate, understanding, and patient in explaining the different resources available to me.
- Mark took our case very seriously, and provided us with all the information we ever needed. We are very grateful for him!
- This service is amazing and one of the things I love about attending a top-rated public university!
- I am so grateful to have gotten Mark's help. He was kind and warm, understood my perspective, and gave me a specific plan of action that resulted in success. It was a huge relief to have this assistance during a challenging time in my life!!

- Mark was just so helpful. He went above and beyond to answer any questions I had and look at my situation in depth.
- All the hard work was done for me. I also felt like Mr. Lucia genuinely cared about my case. It gave me hope that I could get my money back.
- SLS was super supportive and helped solve the problem from international students' perspective.
- I felt like I was able to relax and ask all the questions that were bothering me and were causing me stress, since having those questions adequately answered helped me feel like I could take on the challenge.
- Mark was honestly so nice and helpful, and he really laid everything out super clearly and i felt much more confident about my options and how to proceed.
- Mark provided me with much more detail than I was expecting. He was able to answer all of my questions and was very patient.
- So many positive aspects, but mostly Mark was so concise and on the ball about everything I was going through. He is very clearly experienced, but he also cares. He responds to email so quickly, even when he's swamped. This guy is the best.

### **Areas for improvement**

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

- Offer more appointments and/or shorter wait times for appointments
- Hire additional staff
- Expand SLS services to include representation and appearances in court on behalf of students
- Increase outreach/publicity about SLS