

SLS ANNUAL REPORT FY 2023



Director's Summary

Students Served and Case Types

SLS provides two levels of legal services. The most common is limited scope representation, where SLS attorneys have one or more meetings with students to discuss their legal issues and possible next steps so students can advocate for themselves. Limited scope representation may also include document review and assistance with document drafting.

SLS provided limited scope services to 732 students, an increase of 15% from last fiscal year. In criminal cases, traffic tickets and expungement continue to be our most common practice areas. This year we saw a decrease in Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) cases and an increase in Fictitious ID cases. In civil matters, landlord-tenant disputes are, by far, our more common practice area. This year we saw a decrease in consumer rights cases and an increase in employment law and victim-witness assistance cases.

SLS also provides full scale representation to a smaller number of students wherein SLS attorneys represent students in all aspects of the legal process including document preparation, negotiation, mediation, and trial. SLS provided full representation to 83 students, an increase of 12% from last fiscal year.

Demographics

For the first time, we added questions to our intake form regarding gender and sexual orientation. These are voluntary questions. We found that approximately 33% of respondents identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

We also changed how we ask students about their race and ethnicity. Again, these are voluntary questions included in the intake form. When we relied on MAUI for race and ethnicity in previous fiscal years, we found that international students' race and ethnicity was marked as "international student." In order to obtain more accurate information about our clients, we ask all students, regardless of their citizenship status, for their race and ethnicity.

We also have added Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) as an option. In FY23, 33% of survey respondents identified as something other than white or as multiracial. All demographics are rounded to the nearest whole number.

These numbers are encouraging. We believe they are a sign that we are reaching underrepresented populations on campus.

Client Satisfaction

SLS continues to receive excellent feedback regarding student satisfaction with our services. In FY23, 85% of post-appointment survey respondents reported feeling less stressed after the SLS appointment; 78% of respondents felt less distracted from their studies after the SLS appointment; and 94% of respondents reported having a better understanding of the legal issue after their appointment. Every survey respondent, apart from one, said they would recommend SLS to others.

Monetary Value of Services

In the Iowa City area, student lack free or low-cost legal options other than SLS. The legal clinic at the College of Law provides free services but they have limited practice areas that do not overlap with SLS practice areas. Iowa Legal Aid provides free legal services to low-income Iowans; however, due to their limited resources, it is very unlikely that a student would be able to receive assistance from them, except in an eviction case. Lastly, students charged with criminal offenses may be eligible for a public defender or court-appointed counsel, but they may ultimately need to pay for that representation and will not receive the individualized and holistic services SLS provides.

Student Legal Services strives to increase access to the legal system, and legal fees, even small amounts, are a barrier. For these reasons, students who use SLS for legal advice and representation do not pay for services.

Hypothetically, however, what if students paid SLS like they would a private attorney? This year we utilized a new method of reporting our value to the University of Iowa student body. SLS staff took the number of hours spent working on student cases (ex. appointments, trial preparation, discovery, court appearances, negotiation, legal research, document preparation, etc.) and multiplied it by a low-average hourly rate for a private attorney in the Iowa City area (\$200). The result was a net value of \$353,510.

SLS represented students in tenant-landlord, employee-employer, and other disputes resulting in multiple cash settlements this year. SLS representation clients received \$27,422.66 in those cases. We also calculated that SLS representation clients saved an additional \$39,946.08 as a result of SLS services. This is the amount they were no longer required to pay landlords for things like alleged damage to rental property.

SLS also paid a local immigration attorney \$3,400 to provide free initial consultations to students as part of the SLS Immigration Consultation Program.

The numbers above total \$424,388.74 in value that SLS provided to students. However, this number is a low estimate as it does not include: 1) money students received by utilizing SLS limited scope services and advocating for themselves to either receive cash settlements or avoid paying money to the opposing party; 2) money saved by students by having free notary services available at SLS; and 3) legal services performed by our certified legal interns.

Staff Changes

In May 2022, we decided to discontinue our undergraduate student employment program. We sincerely enjoyed working with student employees, but the program was no longer meeting our needs. Given the ethical requirements associated with operating a law office, we needed more consistency in our administrative staff.

SLS welcomed two staff members in FY23. Rachel Berger was hired as a part-time Administrative Services Coordinator in August 2022, and Teri Keifer was hired as a part-time Administrative Coordinator in September 2022. Unfortunately, we no longer have a full-time administrative staff member and have had to reduce our operating hours. Rachel works 20 hours per week during the academic year (August-May), and Teri works 32 hours per week year-round. Rachel and Teri have been excellent additions to the SLS team, and we are very lucky to have them.

It continues to be difficult to secure law student interns. We had one intern in the fall semester, one in the spring semester, and no interns during the summer. We receive great feedback about our internship program but interest in the program is likely hampered by our inability to pay legal interns and the schedule we require students to maintain. We want interns to be available on days and times we are most likely to be at the courthouse for hearings and trials, which may conflict with law school classes. We will continue to work with the College of Law to build our program and are exploring a research-only intern position for the fall semester.

File Management System

In December, SLS was finally able to acquire a file management system designed for a law office. SLS went live with Practice Panther on July 1, 2023. The new system allows us to consolidate a number of programs we were previously using and allows us to do more in-depth reporting to students and administration. We will be collecting more data on the types of tenants' rights cases on which we advise students, and we will track which landlords we encounter most often. Assistant Director Alyssa Pomponio spent countless hours preparing for the transition to Practice Panther and we are very appreciative of her work.

Challenges

SLS continues to have the highest student to attorney ratio in the Big 10. For every 15,000 students on campus, there is one SLS attorney. Our Big 10 counterparts have a ratio on average of 9,000 students for every SLS attorney. Meanwhile, SLS continues to have the lowest attorney salaries and lowest overall budget in the Big 10. Attorneys must balance case work, outreach/marketing, and administrative tasks, with case work taking precedence. We know there are other students that need us, but we cannot reach them due to lack of resources.

As the following pages show, SLS did an incredible amount of work this year despite significant challenges. SLS staff are passionate about public interest law and are committed to furthering SLS's mission.

Amanda Elkins

CLIENT CASE TYPES

LIMITED SCOPE AND MEDIATION

Number of students
Helped

732



"Just thank you again for being so understanding and knowledgeable, and always being there when students like myself and my friend need help!"

CIVIL ISSUES

- Landlord- Tenant - 346
- Other Civil - 45
- Department of Transportation - 41
- Landlord - Tenant- Lease Review - 39
- Tenant-Tenant - 33
- Employment - 31
- Victim/Witness Assistance -29
- Consumer - 25
- Civil Rights - 20
- Name Change - 20
- Small Claims - 15
- Traffic Accident - 12
- Contracts -11
- Sublease - 8
- Divorce - 7
- Power of Attorney - 6
- Immigration - 3
- Protective Order - 3
- Defamation - 1

CRIMINAL ISSUES

- Traffic/Moving Violation - 45
- Expungement- 19
- Public Intoxication - 16
- Other Simple Misdemeanor - 12
- Fictitious ID - 11
- In Bar After 10pm - 10
- Interference with Official Acts - 9
- Operating While Intoxicated - 9
- Possession of Alcohol Under the Legal Age - 6
- Assault -5
- Disorderly House -4
- Criminal Mischief - 3
- Harassment - 3
- Other Felony - 3
- Other Serious Misdemeanor -3
- Possession of Controlled Substance - Marijuana - 3
- Theft - 3
- Disorderly Conduct-2
- False ID Information - 2
- Other Aggravated Misdemeanor - 2
- Possession of Drug Paraphernalia - 2

Students may have more than 1 issue

CLIENT CASE TYPES

REPRESENTATION CLIENTS

Number of Students
Represented

83



"Amanda is professional, friendly, and personal. She definitely helped me with the divorce case. Without her help, I could not imagine how I would survive my graduate study while handling the divorce case."

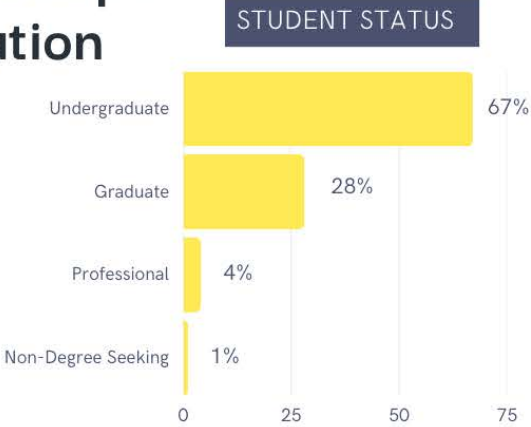
"I was actually very surprised with how quickly I was able to receive my consultation. The lawyer had read up on my information and helped guide me through my options. I would definitely recommend to another student who needs legal help."

CLIENT ISSUES

- Civil Negotiation - 26
- Criminal - 22
- Name Change - 14
- Expungement - 10
- Small claims - 4
- Divorce - 3
- Civil Rights - 1
- Collections - 1
- DOT - 1
- Protective Order - 1
- Victim-Witness Assistance - 1

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

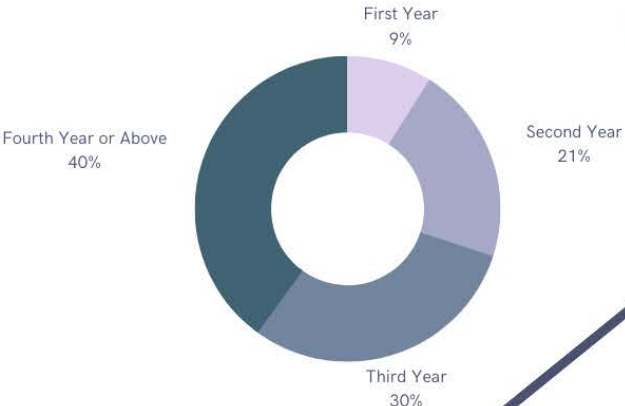
Limited Scope & Mediation



29% of the students we helped were First Generation students.



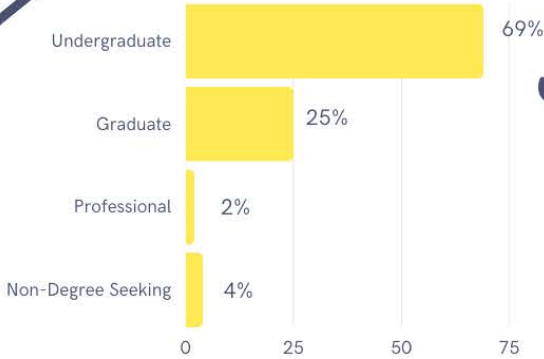
UNDERGRADUATE YEAR



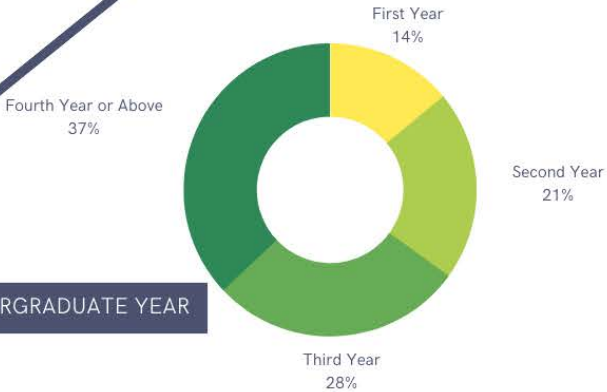
Representation

28% of the students we helped were First Generation students.

STUDENT STATUS



UNDERGRADUATE YEAR



Limited Scope & Mediation



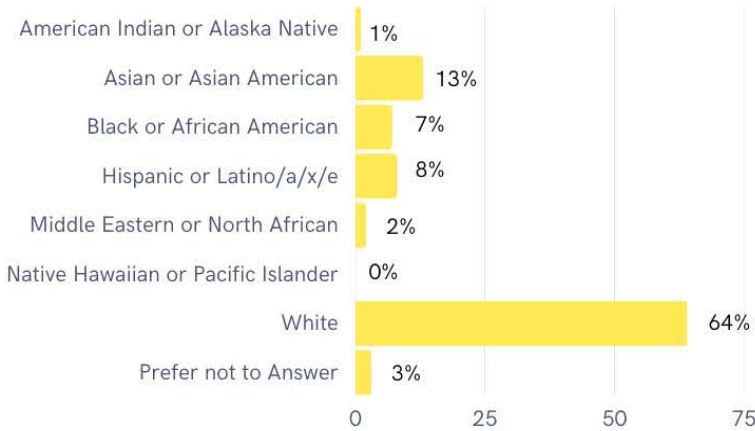
IMMIGRATION STATUS

Of the students we helped:

- 87% were US Citizens.
- 1% were Legal Permanent Residents.
- 9% were International Students.
- 0% identified as something else.

9% of students checked two or more boxes on race/ethnicity.

RACE/ETHNICITY *



Representation

IMMIGRATION STATUS

Of the students we helped:

- 89% were US Citizens.
- 0% were Legal Permanent Residents.
- 10% were International Students.
- 1% identified as something else.

8% of students checked two or more boxes on race/ethnicity.

RACE/ETHNICITY *



"It was a very affirming and positive experience as a transgender person."

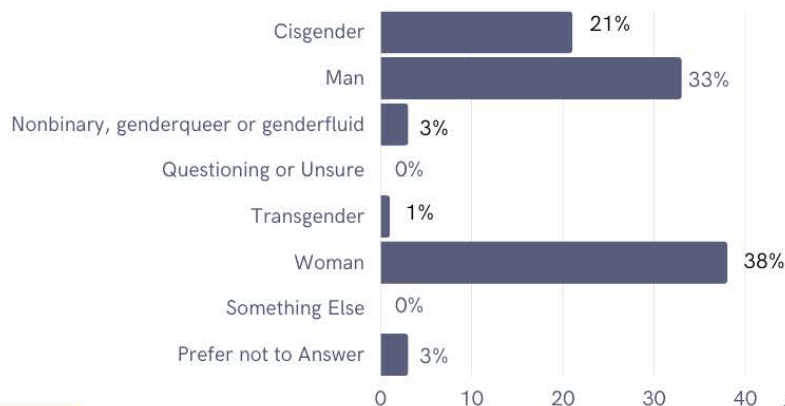
"I am so grateful for student legal services, they are always so kind and accommodating and willing to help in every aspect of a legal situation. I cannot express enough how grateful I am for SLS."

*Students can choose more than one option.

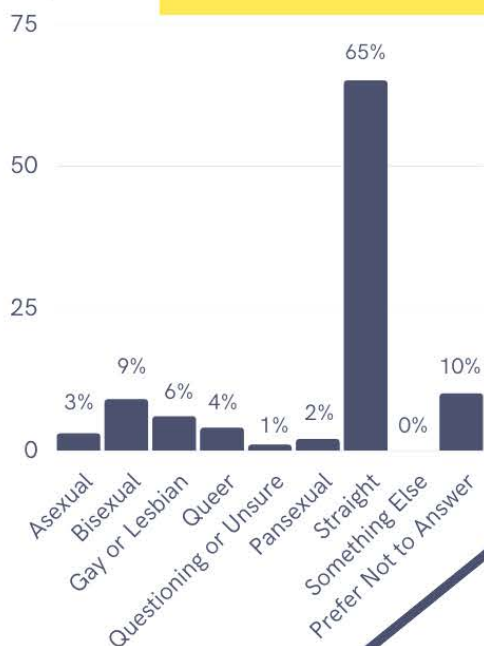
Limited Scope & Mediation

"It was awesome - I had no idea about all of the services there was; they helped me find a fund that saved me around \$200."

GENDER IDENTITY *

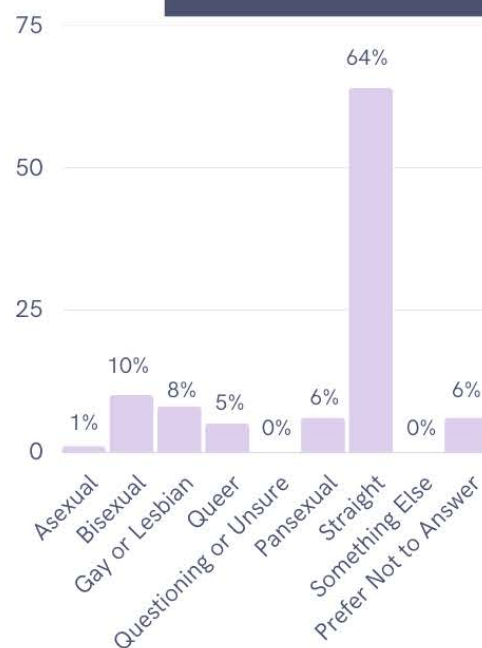


SEXUAL ORIENTATION *

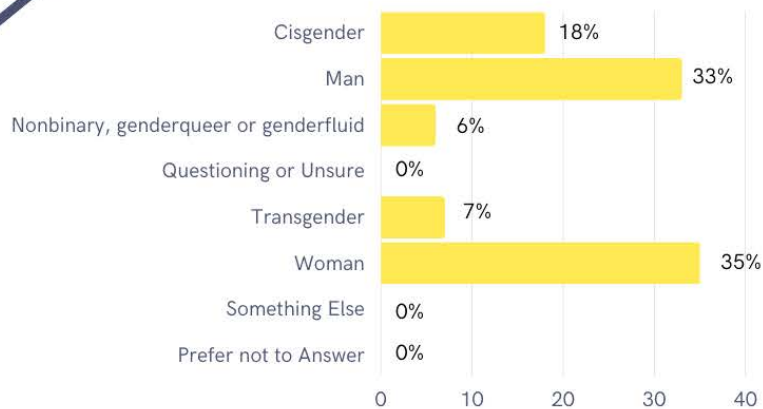


Representation

SEXUAL ORIENTATION *



GENDER IDENTITY *



"The attorney I spoke with was phenomenal!! Even though my appointment was very last minute, attention was paid to me, my issue was taken seriously and a lot of thought went into the information that was told to me. I felt very welcomed and heard when I spoke to her."

VALUE ADDED

LIMITED SCOPE AND MEDIATION STRESS AND DISTRACTION

STRESS

Before the appointment 83% of students strongly agreed or agreed that their legal issue was causing them stress.

After the appointment 85% of students strongly agreed or agreed that their legal issue was causing them LESS stress.



DISTRACTION

Before the appointment 61% of students strongly agreed or agreed that their legal issue was distracting them from their studies.

After the appointment 78% of students strongly agreed or agreed that their legal issue was distracting them LESS from their studies.

"Alyssa is AMAZING! She has been so helpful and patient. She is willing to explain everything and really listens. She helped me work through my options and how each would look potentially."

VALUE ADDED

CLIENT SATISFACTION

99% 

of students said that they would recommend SLS to others

100% 

of students said that they would come back to SLS

"Very appreciative of SLS - I felt very well taken care of, my attorney was insightful and completely knowledgeable about my case. My attorney made sure that I understood next steps appropriate to my case, and took care to communicate in a professional, judgment free manner. I left feeling completely confident about my case after meeting with SLS."

"Amazing communication and prompt responses!"

49% 

of criminal cases resulted in dismissal or acquittal
(*Compared to 26% for Johnson County)

*based on the most recent data from <https://disposedcharges.iowa.gov/>

VALUE ADDED

MONETARY VALUE OF SLS

If students hired private attorneys they would have paid....

\$140,240

For Limited Scope
and Mediation

\$3,400

For Immigration
Consultations

\$280,748.74

For Legal
Representation

As a result of SLS civil representation....



Students were
awarded...

\$27,422.66

Students no longer
owed to opposing
parties...

\$39,946.08



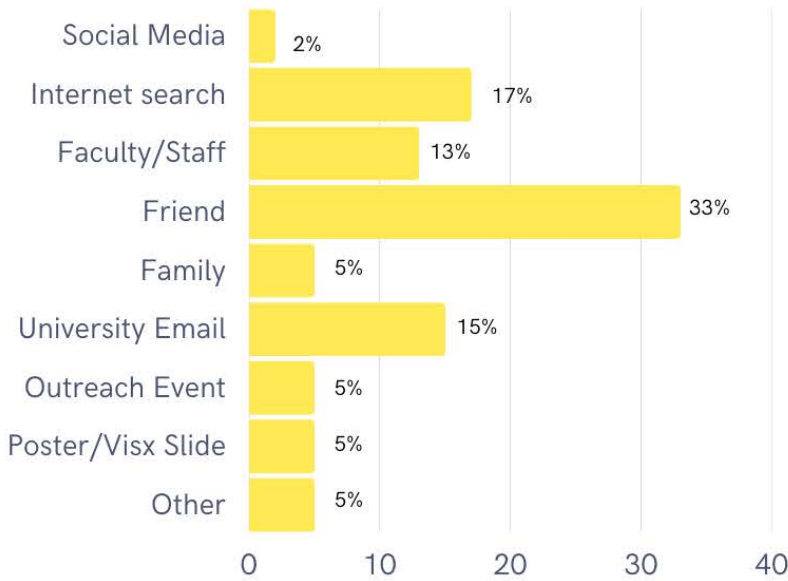
The total monetary value of SLS this
year is...

\$424,388.74*

*Not including money that Limited Scope Clients were awarded or saved as a result of SLS services.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT SLS?

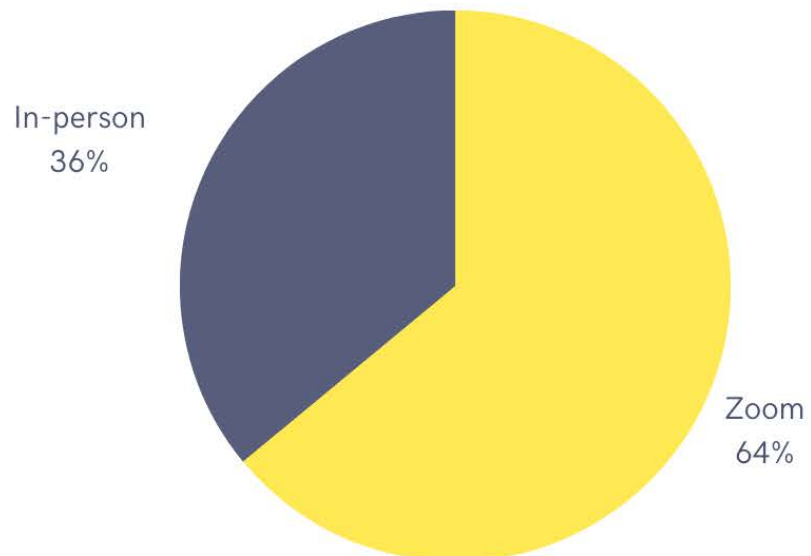


"Amanda has always gone above and beyond to be helpful, timely, and accurate in her legal advising. Her help with a few legal issues has allowed me to focus on my studies and shown me that UI is invested in not letting their students be taken advantage of within the community."

"The individuals I met with were helpful and kind."

"Ms. Alyssa Pomponio is a stellar attorney. During my consult, she was patient, composed, empathetic, non-judgmental, and informative. I thoroughly enjoyed her intelligence and efficient communication. She made me feel comfortable and engaged in the conversation. I am likely to request Alyssa's service if I happen to need additional legal assistance."

APPOINTMENT TYPE



NON-CLIENT SERVICES



NOTARY

We had 163 Notary appointment this year

121 were students
33 were university faculty or staff
9 were members of the public



OUTREACH

We connected with 1709 people at 35 outreach events



PRESENTATIONS

We gave 9 presentations this year to 204 students

"They were extremely helpful and friendly, I would recommend their services to absolutely everyone that needs legal advice"



REFERRALS

We provided 426 referrals and resources to members of the public and students that were not eligible for our services due to conflict of interest and/or non SLS practice area

"SLS is of great help. The lease review was quick and all of our doubts were resolved. We were also informed of many hidden things in the lease that we were unaware of before. The attorney politely explained us everything. I'd recommend each and every student to reach out to SLS for any legal issues or help. Thanks a lot!"