

Student Legal Services

Program Policies, 2023-2024

College of Arts & Sciences

Program Description:

SLS provides a major service – free legal advice to students – and is the oldest continuous student-run legal program in the country (founded in 1977). It is also the only program working independently from university counsel/staff attorneys, and the only program staffed by interns. SLS grew out of the LegalAid movement of the 1960s and 70s and is thus focused on justice and advocacy. SLS helps students navigate their time at UVM and instills a deeper sense of self-advocacy and fairness that can stay with them as they become public citizens.

SLS's model is an "internal internship"—meaning students are not going out and working with community partners directly, but instead are liaising with professionals hired by UVM to complete work that benefits the UVM and local community.

Leadership:

- Faculty: Len Milligan
- Consulting Attorney: Kasey Emmons
- Student TAs: Morgan Ambrose, Eleanor Martin, Antonio Pugliese

Credit:

Academic credit for the SLS program is awarded via CAS 2920 H. Each student may receive 3 elective credits per semester for their participation. The course is repeatable but counts as "internship credit" and is therefore bound by the internship credit maximums imposed by the intern's home College.

If the student wishes to count this course toward their major or minor, they may contact their department chairperson to obtain permission for a degree audit exception.

If a student needs to leave the SLS program mid-semester, they will work with the instructor according to CAS internship policies to complete remaining course requirements or initiate a course withdrawal.

Withdrawals from the course will be completed on a case-by-case basis and according to UVM withdrawal policies.

If a student leaves the program during the Fall semester, the SLS leadership team reserves the right to re-open applications and fill the empty place for the rest of the Fall and/or Spring semester. There is not a guarantee that the student will be able to re-enroll.

Program Format:

Student Legal Services is a credit-bearing internship program and participating students will be responsible for the following:

1. Weekly required class meeting with instructor
2. Course activities will include summarizing the cases encountered, obtaining advice to relay back to student clients, reflective activities, guest speakers and/or instruction on best practices, etc.

Updated January 2024

The first three weeks/sessions will be a crash course in case & criminal law, confidentiality, forensic interviewing, and how to intake cases/interview clients.

Intern tasks & responsibilities outside of class meetings:

- Interns hold “office hours” in which to meet with “clients” (other students) seeking legal advice. At these meetings, interns complete “intake interviews” to fully understand the issue at hand and start a “case.”
- Instructor and TAs work with students to create schedules and expectations for office hours.
- Interns also sit in on meetings with clients that the consulting attorney holds to observe real legal advice being given.
- Students will be expected to spend 6-8 hours per week on SLS-related tasks, assignments, office hours, and observation for a total of 120 hours over the course of the semester.

Internship length: two consecutive semesters. Students apply each spring for the following academic year and agree to sign on for both fall and spring semesters barring any major issue that would inhibit their participation. Interns are encouraged to continue their involvement with SLS for multiple years (either by re-enrolling in credit or in a volunteer capacity).

Policies on representation and client confidentiality:

The areas of law SLS specializes in include landlord/tenant matters, criminal law, civil law, consumer fraud, academic dishonesty, and the academic disciplinary process. Legal advice is provided free of charge to all UVM students. Interns are well trained to decline to give legal advice and are prepared to give referrals if the legal issue is outside the scope of what the consulting attorneys can provide—i.e. no student v. student or Title IX cases. Most cases seen by the program are landlord-tenant or student conduct.

Since Student Legal Services represents all students equally, interns cannot assist in any cases involving a student with a claim against another student.

No interns are legally representing student clients—they are only relaying legal advice from licensed attorneys and/or observing legal advice being given. Interns offer consultations and assistance, however, SLS does not provide the same services a paid attorney would. Interns, faculty, or the consulting attorney will refer clients to a local attorney to fulfill these needs if that is what is required.

Contact:

Those who need to open a case with Student Legal Services may attend in-person office hours to have an initial intake interview with an intern. SLS can also be contacted via phone at 802-656-4379 or via email at legal@uvm.edu.