Simpson helps train Albanians
for legal life within Council of Europe

A.W. Brian Simpson, the Charles F. and
Edith J. Clyne Professor of Law, says law
school facilities may be overcrowded and
libraries inadequate in Albania, but future
lawyers there are “very good students and
very quick and have been taught by
dedicated faculty members.”

Simpson was part of a team of
Westerners who taught Albanian law
students at the University of Tirana earlier
this year as part of a British Foreign Office-
sponsored program to help Albania assume
a full role as a member of the Council of
Europe.

Albania joined the Council of Europe in
1995, Simpson said, but full, functional
integration into the organization demands
much more than signing on and flashing
your membership card. Ten countries —
Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the
Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Ireland,
Italy, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden —
signed the treaty that established the
council in 1949 in partial fulfillment of
Winston Churchill's vision of “a kind of
United States of Europe.”

Council membership has expanded
continually, and after the breakup of the
Soviet Union has added several countries,
like Bulgaria and Poland, that formerly
were in the Soviet bloc, as well as Croatia,
formerly part of Yugoslavia, and Albania, a
communist country that dodged the yoke
of Moscow by aligning itself first with the
People's Republic of China and then going
it alone. Membership in the council
brought such countries into a brave new
world that includes western-and
European-style law and requires becoming
a signatory to the European Convention on
Human Rights.

There is no tradition of case study in
Albania and other formerly communist
countries, Simpson explained. Legal
interpretation in these countries usually
had been based on statutory texts.