This message is sent on behalf of James M. Glaser, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences.

Dear members of the Tufts Arts and Sciences and Engineering community,

It is my sad duty to inform you that Professor Christopher Schmidt-Nowara of the Department of History passed away after a brief illness in Paris this past weekend, while visiting his beloved daughter Althea. He was widely recognized as one of the world’s leading historians of Spain and the Spanish Colonial Empire. Professor Schmidt-Nowara was 48.

Chris joined the history department in 2011 to assume the distinguished Prince of Asturias Chair in Spanish Culture and Civilization. His research focused on the history of slavery and emancipation, and of politics and ideas, in the Spanish empire. He joined Tufts from Fordham University, where he had been a Magis Distinguished Professor and Associate Chair of the History Department. Recently, he had embarked on a new work, a study of Spanish prisoners of war during the resistance against French rule (1808-1814) and the independence struggles in Spanish America (1810-1830).

Chris received his B.A. from Kenyon College in 1988 and his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Before Fordham, Chris taught at Stanford, and he also had been a visiting professor at the universities of Sao Paulo and Puerto Rico and a visiting fellow at Princeton. Among his published works and journal articles was his most recent book Slavery and Antislavery in Spain’s Atlantic Empire (2011), selected by Choice as one the year’s outstanding academic titles for 2012.

Upon learning of his sudden passing, Chris’s colleagues cited his intelligence, enthusiasm, and warmth. "The history department fondly remembers Chris as an inspiring teacher, brilliant scholar, and a warm, friendly, and endearing colleague. He was a passionate follower of Boston sports, a lover of good beer and food, and a committed mentor to junior colleagues. Above all, however, he was a devoted father, brother, son, and friend who will be greatly missed but whose presence will remain in our hearts," wrote Professor Peniel Joseph.

During this time, it is important for us to remember to support one another. Faculty and staff may turn to support services that are available through Health Services. Health Resources can be reached at 800-451-1834.

A service celebrating Chris’s life will be held on campus in the fall. Those interested in being involved may contact our University Chaplain, the Reverend Greg McGonigle at chaplaincy@tufts.edu.

For those of us who took his excellent courses, who engaged him in conversation about history and its meaning, who enjoyed learning about his daughter or the latest baseball news, or who worked with him on FRAC or other committees, Chris’ absence will be acutely felt. May his memory be a blessing to us all.

In addition to Chris’s daughter Althea and her mother Miranda, survivors include his mother Betsey, sister Molly, brother Peter, and cousin Ruth.

Thank you for joining us as we extend our deep compassion to the Schmidt-Nowara family.