N. Bruce Hanes, Professor Emeritus of Civil and Environmental Engineering, passed away suddenly on April 21, 2014.

Bruce joined the Tufts community in 1961 after completing his doctorate in water microbiology and public health at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Upon his arrival, Bruce was charged by Professor and Chair Earle F. Littleton to develop a program in environmental engineering. This past fall marked the 50th anniversary of Tufts School of Engineering’s environmental health engineering program, which Bruce initiated.

He successfully secured one of the first environmental engineering graduate traineeship grants from the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration, the predecessor of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Building on that success, Bruce won a similar training grant in environmental health from the U.S. Public Health Service, and convinced Tufts Medical School Emeritus Professor Ralph E. Wheeler to come out of retirement to lead that program. Bruce was an active lobbyist for these types of federally funded training grant programs, testifying before multiple congressional committees as an advocate for the education of environmental engineering and health professionals. As a result, he was elected president of the Association for Environmental Engineering Professors in 1978.

Bruce’s research centered on water quality and environmental engineering. His pioneering investigations on the incidence and occurrence of microbial indicator organisms used to evaluate drinking- and bathing-water quality formed the basis for EPA standards and regulations. Bruce also was cognizant of the impact of research on a local level. He initiated the formation of the Aberjona River Commission to develop reports on the point and non-point sources of pollution in the river that runs through the northwestern suburbs of Boston and empties into the Mystic Lakes. These early studies on contamination, including pervasive carcinogens from various industrial sites, led to increased scrutiny of this area and ultimately resulted in one of the largest environmental remediations in the northeastern United States as described in the book, A Civil Action, by Jonathan Harr. In the late 1980s, he served as chair of the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission and was also elected president of the American Academy of Environmental Engineers.

In 1969, Bruce was appointed department chair and served for 12 years. During this time, he was instrumental in developing the joint master’s program in engineering and public policy. Bruce also fostered the growth of the interdisciplinary undergraduate environmental studies program and the establishment of the Tufts Center for Environmental Management. As a member of the ABET Board - “the governing body that oversees the accreditation of undergraduate engineering degrees in the United States, he worked diligently to incorporate health and safety topics into engineering design courses and refine the criteria used to evaluate environmental engineering programs accredited by ABET, Inc. His leadership contributed to the department’s official name change from “Civil Engineering” to “Civil and Environmental Engineering” in 1993 and the subsequent accreditation of the Bachelor of Science in Environmental Engineering in 1995, just after he retired from Tufts with the Seymour O. Simches Award for Distinguished Teaching and Advising in 1992.

Though he had officially left Tufts, Bruce never truly left the department. He faithfully attended the annual CEE Alumni and Student Awards Dinner and continued to mentor students and faculty in the department. In
1994, Bruce received the Centennial Award for Distinguished Professional Service that marked the 100-year anniversary of the School of Engineering.

As Lin Brown, his successor as CEE Chair, wrote in Bruce's official statement of retirement: "His legacy to us is simple and clear: to see the best in people, to view change as an opportunity, and to take risks by investing in people and programs. If you would like to share memories or reflect on the positive impact Professor and Mrs. Hanes had on your collegiate life and on the Tufts School of Engineering, please contact Lin Brown, linfield.brown@tufts.edu.

Learn more about how you can support the N. Bruce and Lorry Hanes Endowed Fellowship in Civil and Environmental Engineering.