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Tufts student, parents die in New Zealand car accident

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By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT FEBRUARY 19, 2015

A Tufts University student and her parents died in a car crash Tuesday while traveling in New Zealand, according to campus officials and authorities.

Julia Lee, 20, a junior working on a degree in computer science, was enrolled in a study abroad program at the University of Auckland, officials said.

Her parents, Aesoon Lee, 52, and Warren Lee, 53, both American citizens living in Hong Kong, also died in the accident, and her 18-year-old brother, whose name was not disclosed, was hospitalized with critical injuries.

“Julia was a young woman of tremendous vibrancy and compassion, and she will be deeply missed,” said a campus-wide

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message Wednesday night signed by Tufts administrators, including president Anthony P. Monaco.

New Zealand authorities said the student's family was visiting her to help her move before she began the study-abroad program.

Lee was driving about 3:45 p.m. Tuesday near the North Island town of Tokoroa when the car crossed the center line and collided head-on with a logging truck, authorities said.

Authorities said an investigation is ongoing, but they believe her parents, who were sitting in the back of the car, were not wearing seat belts. Her brother was in the passenger seat. The truck driver was not injured, authorities said.

The university said it will hold memorial services this week to remember Lee and will help students plan other tributes and send messages of support to Lee's brother and other relatives. The college said it is making support services, including counseling and mental health staff, available for members of the campus community.

Nearly three years ago, three Boston University students studying in New Zealand died and another was seriously injured when the minivan they were traveling in rolled over. A New Zealand police investigation found that none of the students was wearing seat belts and that four other individuals in the van were wearing belts and suffered minor injuries.

One month after the May 2012 accident, the driver of the van, a BU student, pleaded guilty to careless driving and was banned from driving in New Zealand for six months.

Material from the Associated Press was used in this report. Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com.

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