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MIT student on leave dies in Fla. home

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By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF MARCH 07, 2015

An MIT freshman died at her home in Florida on Thursday night, campus officials announced, marking the eighth death of a member of the university community over the past year.

Christina Tournant had recently decided to take a medical leave from school and returned home to her family, MIT's president, L. Rafael Reif, wrote in a campuswide e-mail Friday.

"I know this news will have a profound effect on every one of us," Reif's letter said. "This is a moment when we need each other, a moment for caring, understanding, and kindness. We will come through this tragic period together."

Campus officials did not say how Tournant died. The Tech student newspaper reported that Suzanne Flynn, the housemaster of the dormitory Tournant had lived in, told students that the death was still under investigation but was believed to have been a suicide.

Reif wrote that, before going on leave, Tournant was a resident of Maseeh Hall and was a member of the swim



team and the sorority Alpha Phi.

A gathering was to be held on campus Friday, and a second on Saturday afternoon, Reif wrote, “so that we may support each other in this difficult time.”

In his letter, he urged members of the MIT community who feel they need help to seek counseling and support services provided by the university.

The news of Tournant’s death comes several days after another freshman died. Campus officials have said they believe that Matthew Nehring took his own life early Sunday.

Since last March, the school has mourned the deaths of one other undergraduate student, a professor, and four graduate students, one of whom was enrolled at Harvard but studying in a joint program with MIT.

One of the graduate students’ deaths was ruled an accident; the cause of another graduate student’s death is still pending. The other four cases have been ruled suicides.

MIT has taken steps to improve its mental health and counseling programs following a series of suicides over the last few decades, some of which resulted in wrongful death lawsuits against the school alleging administrators did not do enough to help the students.

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