

## Antarctic core reveals warm period



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Sophie Warny, LSU assistant professor of geology and geophysics, and her New Zealand colleague, Michael Hannah, study samples at the Antarctic Research Facility, at Florida State University. Their research discovered an unusual warming period of up to 50 degrees Fahrenheit more than 15 million years ago on the frozen continent.

### LSU has role in geologic drilling study

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Advocate Capitol News Bureau

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- Page 1 of 2
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LSU geologist Sophie Warny was studying an Antarctic drilling sample when she thought she inadvertently received the wrong core sample.

What she saw was evidence of a quantity of plankton and freshwater algae that could not exist in such abundance in the frozen continent.

"It was just amazingly rich," said Warny, who is also curator of the LSU Museum of Natural Science.

"At first we were wondering were we sent the wrong core," she said.

Once it was confirmed, "We knew we had something special," said Warny, a Belgium native who came to LSU in 1998.

The research, which is being published today as the cover story for "Geology," a prominent academic journal, shows evidence of a dramatic warming period in Antarctica about 15.7 million years ago that lifted the temperature to about 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Antarctic ice sheet formed about 35 million years ago.

Such relative warmth of 50 degrees allowed for greenery, rainforests, ponds and lakes well after Antarctica had drifted continentally enough to become iced over, she said.

The research could play a key role in weather forecasting when it comes to global warming and the melting of Antarctic ice sheets, which has already begun, Warny said.

Enough continental melting, Warny said, although quite a

ways off, could eventually mean enough of a global sea level rise to flood much of southern Louisiana.

“I don’t see that collapse for a long time,” Warny said. “But this is the main concern — how fast can it melt?”

The National Science Foundation-funded research involved an international team of scientists from the U.S., Italy, Germany and New Zealand for the Antarctic Geologic Drilling Program, called ANDRILL. The rare comprehensive drilling project took more than 1,100 meters of samples.

Warny’s Antarctic research colleague, Rosemary Askin, who was with Ohio State University, believes the research is producing some of the best records ever for Antarctica.

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