New director hopes to make campus safer, equal for women

By Lauren Harrington
Summer Reporter

Katie Pope hopes to improve gender equality and brainstorm ways to keep women safer on campus, but first she'll have to find her office.

Pope, the new director of the Women's Resource Office, begins July 3 and plans to contribute to a more comfortable environment for female students, faculty and staff through her position.

"I'm really looking forward to getting started and learning more about the campus and its needs, but at this point I'll be happy if I can find my office on my first day," Pope said with a laugh.

Alysa Christmas Rollock, vice president for human relations, said the position has been vacant since fall 2005 and the University held a national search to find a replacement.

"We looked at many candidates," Rollock said. "She certainly has a background in philanthropy, and certainly her experience at Iowa State and her current work addressing women's issues (were factors in her selection)."

Rollock also said that the Women's Resource Office is responsible for the climate for women on campus and developing programs to address gender issues, and Pope said those topics have always concerned her.

"I see women's issues like social justice issues. It's something I feel very strongly about, and I've always had an interest in women's issues from an academic standpoint," said Pope. "For women on (college) campuses, a lot of the challenges are the same: the desire to balance work and family, equity issues, student retention and feeling comfortable in any program (students) choose."

Campus safety is also important to Pope, as she was once the director of a program concerning domestic violence and sexual assault at a different institution.

"Sexual and physical assault are always of concern, and it's important for myself and any office to be aware of that and have resources available, and to help brainstorm ways to help keep women safer," she said.