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**Mathew Kleiner “Create Change: Health Leadership Award” 2022 Awardee:
Breanne Kisslestein, PhD candidate**

Cornell Health is pleased to announce Breanne Kisslestein, PhD candidate, as a 2022 recipient of the “Create Change: Health Leadership Award.”

Breanne was nominated for the award for being a strong advocate and collaborative change agent to improve student well-being. Her commitment to improving the health of students, particularly graduate students, comes from a social justice framework and includes the deep-rooted belief that all students should have access to health and educational opportunities.

During the years Breanne has been a graduate student at Cornell, she has maintained extensive involvement in campus organizations including serving on the Cornell Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA), and chairing the GPSA Student Advocacy Committee and the GPSA GPCI Mental Health & Well-Being Ad-Hoc Committee. She also served on the Cornell Presidential Task Force on Campus Climate and the Cornell Graduate and Professional Mental Health Advisory Council, as well as numerous other groups and committees.

Among the many initiatives she has provided leadership on, Breanne championed a collaboration with Cornell Health to offer a special “Notice and Respond: Assisting Students in Distress” session for graduate student teaching assistants, providing participants with invaluable skills to support undergraduate mental health. Another initiative addressed the importance of the advisor-advisee relationship to graduate students’ academic success and mental health. Breanne designed, implemented, and evaluated an event titled, “Let’s Talk about Bad Advising,” the first formally acknowledged event that named “bad advising” and identified its mental health impact.

Out of concern for the unique stresses experienced by graduate students with families, Breanne joined the University Students with Families Advisory Committee to advocate for this student population. As part of her work on the committee, Breanne collaborated with Cornell’s Lindseth Climbing Center to create the “Climbing for Students with Families” event, and has continued to work with the Climbing Center to create the Adaptive Climbing Proposal.

In addition to her numerous other contributions to campus health and well-being, the nominators added that Breanne’s lived experience is that she identifies as a DeafBlind and chronically ill student. Breanne not only is navigating the graduate student experience but also the barriers associated with being in a predominately hearing and sighted institution like Cornell. As a result of this experience (among others), Breanne is a fierce advocate for improvements at Cornell to reimagine our systems, policies, and programs that allow all students access to graduate education and provide more support for health, disability, social justice, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Her personal investment of vision, time, energy, and dedication is a model for other students on gathering and working with partners to effect change.