



ACGME Parker J. Palmer Courage to Teach Award

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



Why did the ACGME establish the Parker J. Palmer Courage to Teach Award?

The ACGME recognizes that program directors face many challenges in administering a residency or fellowship program. Those finding innovative ways to teach residents and fellows, and to provide quality health care while remaining connected to the initial impulse to care for others in this environment, should be celebrated.

Who is Parker J. Palmer?

Parker J. Palmer is a highly respected writer and traveling teacher who works independently on issues in education, community, spirituality, and social change. In 1998, "The Leadership Project," a survey of 11,000 educators, named Palmer as one of the 30 most influential senior leaders in higher education and one of 10 key agenda-setters of the past decade. "He has inspired a generation of teachers and reformers with evocative visions of community, knowing, and spiritual wholeness." Palmer is senior associate of the American Association for Higher Education, and senior adviser to the Fetzer Institute, for which he designed the Teacher Formation Program for K-12 teachers. Author of such widely praised books as *The Company of Strangers*, *The Active Life*, *To Know As We Are Known*, and *The Courage to Teach*, he holds a PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. He lives in Madison, Wisconsin. Read more about Dr. Palmer's work [here](#).

Why the "Courage to Teach"?

An excerpt from **Good Teaching**
A Matter of Living the Mystery
By Parker J. Palmer

COURAGE TO TEACH®

"The word "courage" comes from a root that means "heart," and I like to transpose the words. How can we develop and sustain, in ourselves and each other, the heart for good teaching (assuming that the mind is already available)? Good teaching requires courage—the courage to explore one's ignorance as well as insight, to yield some control in order to empower the group, to evoke other people's lives as well as reveal one's own. Furthermore, good teaching sometimes goes unvalued by academic institutions, by the students for whom it is done, and even by those teachers who do it. Many of us "lose heart" in teaching."

"How shall we recover the courage that good teaching requires? In its original meaning, a "professor" was not someone with esoteric knowledge and technique. Instead, the word referred to a person able to make a profession of faith in the midst of a dangerous world. All good teachers, I believe, have access to this confidence. It comes not from the ego but from a soul-deep sense of being at home in the world despite its dangers. This is the authority by which good teachers teach. This is the gift they pass on to their students. Only when we take heart as professors, can we "give heart" to our students—and that, finally, is what good teaching is all about."

How do I make a nomination?

Download the nomination form from the ACGME website, complete it, and submit it along with support letters (**all three letters must be signed**), and curriculum vitae, according to the directions on the form. All materials (nomination form, support letters, and curriculum vitae) must arrive by email in **one PDF (portable PDF files are not acceptable)**. To do this, assemble all materials and scan. The resulting PDF can then be emailed. **Material received in piecemeal or that includes unsigned letters will not be accepted.** Direct any questions to DeLonda Dowling: ddowling@acgme.org or 312.755.5059.

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What is the deadline for nominations?

The deadline is **Wednesday, April 6, 2022** and all nominations must be received by **5:00 p.m. Central**. Nominations received after that date/time will not be accepted.

Are associate program directors eligible for this award? No.

Does associate program director experience count towards experience as a program director?

No. Eligible program directors **MUST** have at least five years of experience as a program director.

How many nominees will be selected to receive the award?

Up to 10 program directors will be selected.

Is there a limit to the number of nominations I can submit?

Yes. The ACGME only accepts **one** program director nomination per institution.

What is awarded?

Each Courage to Teach awardee will receive a plaque, as well as travel expenses paid by the ACGME for the recipient and a guest to travel to the ACGME Annual Educational Conference to receive the award. In addition, each awardee receives an expenses-paid retreat experience that is unlike any other. New and former awardees will meet in a setting designed to support and honor them and their work and create a space that invites but does not intrude, fostering a sense of community that embraces Parker J. Palmer's Courage to Teach and Lead concepts.

The retreat is typically held the second or third week of May, beginning on a Wednesday evening and ending on a Friday afternoon. Some former awardees have had this to say about their retreat experience:

My work as a program director for 26 residents/year for 20+ years, module director for >5000 medical students and over 16 years as Credentials Committee chair for 1,100 physicians has directly benefited from attending Parker Palmer Courage to Teach Retreats and from the sustaining relationships in this unique community. Not only has the fellowship and venue been superb but (in my opinion) the focus on wholeness has had great impact. The definitions of "community, the practice of poetry, a broader vision of truth" are met with examples at the retreat for reflection by our outward selves and inward selves.

C. Bruce Alexander, MD

President Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society

I learned that in my effort to be a clinician and educator my inner and outer worlds must be integrated. It is not what or how I present to students, it is who I am that fosters learning. Since that retreat, I have tried to nurture this principle. This process helps me to be complete in the moment for my students and remind me that I cannot isolate my identity from my intentions and actions. Each teachable moment has the potential for becoming a personal experience for me and other. It is the heart of reflective practice with residents and patients.

Gene Beresin, MD

Director of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Residency Training

Massachusetts General Hospital and McLean Hospital

Co-Director, Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Mental Health and Media

Professor of Psychiatry

Harvard Medical School

Department of Psychiatry

Massachusetts General Hospital

The retreat (and the incredible leaders) provided space and time for us to stop and reframe – and now, 3 years later, I continue to benefit from lessons learned.

Lois L. Bready, MD

Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education

Designated Institutional Official

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Professor and Vice Chair, Department of Anesthesiology
UTHSC San Antonio

Receiving the Parker J. Palmer Courage to Teach Award and attending the retreat were transformational experiences in my career. The retreat created a passion around teaching, and I became aware that this is where I should be focusing my academic energy. The conversation went from "What are you going to do after being program director?" to "How can I create a learning environment that enhances the development of young physicians."

Joseph T. Gilhooly, MD
Former Program Director
Professor, Pediatrics, Neonatal-perinatal medicine
Oregon Health & Science University

The retreat of Parker Palmer recipients was a true landmark in my career as a teacher and learner. The ability to pause and sit with other program directors to reflect upon the work we do provided me the ability to appreciate what I contribute, those we teach and the community we have built.

Byron Joyner, MD
Director, Pediatric Urology
Seattle Children's Hospital

The retreat was a remarkably powerful experience which enriched both my professional and personal life. It stimulated a renewed interest in the literature of reflective practice, as well as a wonderful resurgence in enjoyment of the world of poetry. I gained a better understanding of what I am trying to accomplish as a DIO, and I believe I ask better questions and am a much deeper listener.

Douglas B. Dorner, MD, FACS
Senior Vice President, Medical Education and Research
Director of Medical Education/ACGME Designated Institutional Official
Iowa Health

The retreat has led me to be more intentionally self-reflective about my work, and my mission in my department. As a result, I have branched out into new areas for me, teaching my senior residents to contemplate their futures in a purposeful manner (including writing a personal mission statement), and to create a faculty development workshop for junior faculty members.

Terry Massagli, MD
Professor, Rehabilitation Medicine and Pediatrics Rehabilitation Medicine Residency Director Endowed
University of Washington

The retreat was an amazing opportunity for me, it created a safe environment that fostered personal and professional renewal through time and space to reflect on life and work. It allowed for networking of like-minded teachers and leaders in healthcare to share "why we do what we do," indicate resources available, and opportunities for collaboration. Personally, this gave me an invitation to help foster the "vocational" aspect of our work through mindfulness, self-care and care of each other.

Mukta Panda, MD, FACP
Professor and Chair
Department of Medicine
Program Director Transitional Year Program
University of Tennessee - College of Medicine

When will the award winners be announced?

Selections will be made by the ACGME Awards Committee at its fall 2022 meeting; afterwards, ACGME President and CEO Dr. Thomas J. Nasca will notify recipients. The recipients will be acknowledged at the 2023 ACGME Annual Educational Conference. Award announcements will be published in a press release, the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, and the ACGME *e-Communication*, as well as on the ACGME website and social media accounts.