Award FAQs
Parker J. Palmer Courage to Teach Award

The Parker J. Palmer Courage to Teach Award

Background

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 program. Those finding innovative ways to teach residents 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 eleven thousand educators, named Palmer as one of the thirty "most influential senior leaders" in higher education and one of ten 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 whom 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, The Courage to Teach, he holds a PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. He lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

Why the “Courage to Teach”?

An excerpt from Good Teaching
A Matter of Living the Mystery
By Parker 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?

Your nominee must meet the eligibility requirements. There will be no exceptions.

Eligibility Requirements
- Current program director for ACGME-accredited residency or fellowship
- Currently directs a program that has full or continued full accreditation with a long cycle length until the next ACGME review
- Has at least five years of experience as a program director
- Participates in a national program director’s association—if one exists for the specialty

Criteria for Selection
Program directors must:
- meet eligibility requirements
- embody Parker J. Palmer’s “courage to teach” philosophy
- integrate ACGME core competencies
- demonstrate excellent leadership and mentorship practices
- teach excellent patient care and safety practices
- encourage and achieve program development/innovation
- be a strong role model, promoting ethics of reflection and humanism

Application Instructions

Three components are required for application:
1. A completed application form
2. Three letters of support (each letter is limited to 500 words or less)
3. A current curriculum vitae

About the Letters of Support
- Letters should be addressed to ACGME Awards Committee.
- One of the letters must be from current residents/fellows.
• The two other letters may be from faculty, department chairs, other institutional representatives, review committee members, etc.
• Comments from a group, e.g. faculty, residents, etc. should be compiled into one “group letter.” We will not accept more than three letters of support for each nominee.
• The letters should show how the nominee has the “courage to teach”—how he or she brings both intellect and heart to the dual vocations of being a teacher and physician.
• The letters should show the impact of the nominee’s accomplishments in educating residents/fellows, i.e. in the following areas:
  o ACGME core competencies
  o leadership/mentorship
  o patient care and safety
  o program development and innovation
  o role modeling behaviors, including reflection and humanism

Where do I send the material?

The application form may be downloaded from the ACGME website and emailed along with support letters and curriculum vitae to: DeLonda Dowling at ddowling@acgme.org.

If you have any questions, you may contact DeLonda Dowling at ddowling@acgme.org (by phone at 312/755-5059) or Amy Beane abeane@acgme.org (by phone at 312/755-5075). All materials (application form, support letters, and curriculum vitae) must arrive by email in one PDF. To do this, assemble all materials and scan. The resulting PDF can then be emailed. Material received in piecemeal will not be accepted.

What is the deadline for nominations?

The deadline is Friday, March 14, 2014, and must be received by 5:00 p.m. Central. Nominations received after that date will not be accepted.

How many nominees will be selected to receive the award?

Up to ten program directors will be selected.

What is the award that will be given?

Each program director will receive a plaque and travel expenses will be paid by the ACGME for each recipient and a guest to travel to the ACGME Annual Educational Conference to receive their award. In addition, each program director will receive an expense paid retreat experience that is different than any other. New and some former awardees will meet in a wonderful setting designed to support and honor them and their work and create a space that invites but does not intrude. It is a different form of community and embraces the Courage to Teach and Lead concepts of Parker J. Palmer, a sociologist, teacher, and author of the Courage to Teach, and many more books. For information about Dr. Palmer’s work click here http://www.couragerenewal.org/parker.
The retreat is typically held before the Memorial Day weekend in May and begins on Wednesday evening and ends 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 1100 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, M.D.
Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education
Designated Institutional Official
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
Portland, Oregon

*The retreat of Palmer Parker 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, M.D., FACS
Senior Vice President, Medical Education and Research
Director of Medical Education/ACGME Designated Institutional Official
Iowa Health
Des Moines, IA 50309

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 & 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
Chattanooga, TN

**When will the award winners be announced?**

Selections will be made by the ACGME Awards Committee at its September 2014 meeting; afterwards, the ACGME CEO will notify the recipients. The recipients will be acknowledged at the March 2015 ACGME Annual Educational Conference. Award announcements will be published in a press release, the ACGME Journal of Graduate Medical Education, and the ACGME Bulletin, as well as posted on the ACGME website.