



## 2026 ACGME Parker J. Palmer Courage to Teach Award Frequently Asked Questions



---

### ***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 them, then email the resulting PDF. **Material received in piecemeal or that includes unsigned letters will not be accepted.** Direct any questions to DeLonda Bonasera: [dbonasera@acgme.org](mailto:dbonasera@acgme.org) or 312.755.5059.

***What is the deadline for nominations?***

All nominations must be emailed before **5:00 p.m. Central on Wednesday, March 12, 2025**. Nominations received after the deadline and/or submitted in piecemeal will not be considered.

***Are associate program directors eligible for this award?***

No.

***Does associate program director experience count toward program director experience?***

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

/

***How many nominees will 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 awardee will receive a plaque, as well as travel expenses paid by the ACGME for the recipient and a guest to travel to the 2026 ACGME Annual Educational Conference, where the award will be presented. Conference registration will be waived for awardees. The 2026 conference will take place on February 19-21 in San Diego, California.

In addition, each awardee will receive an expenses-paid retreat experience 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 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:

*"In a job where there are so many competing demands, it was refreshing to work at a completely different pace! Just GO... Our world does not allow for us to do these things often enough in this digital, instant access age... JUST GO... you won't be sorry you did!"* - Nedd Brown, EdD, Courage to Lead Awardee

*"This was amazing and should be continued. Self-work is not self-ish. The more I am ok, the healthier and more insightful I am, the better leader I become."* - Sandi Moutsios, MD, Courage to Teach Awardee

*“I am more than the tasks I accomplish. I will continue to marinate and percolate on this experience for a very long time. I’m leaving full, not exhausted nor emotionally drained.”* - Kelly Corning, Debra L. Dooley GME Program Coordinator Excellence Awardee

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

Selections will be made by the ACGME Awards Committee at its fall 2025 meeting, and shortly thereafter recipients will be notified. Award announcements will then 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.

***When will the award be presented?***

Awards will be presented at the 2026 ACGME Annual Educational Conference.