



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



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

The ACGME recognizes that designated institutional officials (DIOs) face many challenges in creating an environment for educational programs; facilitating residents' and fellows' ethical, professional, and personal development; and ensuring safe and appropriate care of patients. The Courage to Lead Award acknowledges the leadership and commitment of DIOs who foster an excellent environment for resident/fellow education.

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](#).

How do I make a nomination?

Download the nomination form from the ACGME website, complete it, and submit it, along with support letters and curriculum vitae, according to the directions on the form. All materials (nomination form, **signed** 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 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.

How many awards are given?

There are three award categories:

- Small hospital (1-24 residency/fellowship programs)
- Medium hospital (25-49 residency/fellowship programs)
- Large academic centers (50 or more residency/fellowship programs)

Up to one DIO will be selected from each of these three groups (or any combination thereof at the ACGME Awards Committee's discretion), and up to three awards may be given in a particular year.

What is awarded?

Each Courage to Lead 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 the awardee. 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 awards be presented?

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