

Parker J. Palmer Courage to Lead Award



The Parker J. Palmer Courage to Lead Award honors designated institutional officials (DIOs) who have demonstrated excellence in overseeing residency and fellowship programs at their Sponsoring Institutions. DIOs have authority and responsibility for all graduate medical education (GME) programs in a teaching hospital, community hospital, or other type of institution that sponsors GME programs. Parker J. Palmer is the author of the book *The Courage to Teach*; his promotion of the concept of “living divided no more” has proven relevant to teaching in academic health centers.



A. Michelle Thompson, MD

Designated Institutional Official
Geisinger
Danville, Pennsylvania

Nominators had this to say:

“My relationship with Dr. Thompson started when I reached out, wanting to become more involved with the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts at Geisinger. As a young, black, female physician, I found myself, as I often have in academia, working in predominantly white, male spaces. I was working on building a personal community with those of my shared identity and wanted to translate that to my professional environment. From the moment I reached out, Dr. Thompson was all in. This is especially significant because the institution had not yet taken a firm and outward stand on issues regarding DEI. While Dr. Thompson appreciated the need for discretion from an institutional standpoint, she understood the impact of institutional support for trainees, particularly those who identified as marginalized communities. She supported the valiant effort to put together various shared spaces in which the groundwork for DEI work could begin, especially within the GME. This included advocacy groups, education committees, and discussion panels. It was with her support that I was able to host the very first Diversity Open House on behalf of the internal medicine-pediatrics program, which garnered significant attention for the program during recruitment season.”

“Dr. Thompson’s values-based decision-making and financial stewardship empowered the creation of a full-time position focused exclusively on anticipating and supporting the well-being needs of our 600+ learners. She repeatedly demonstrates she does not serve as DIO to performatively check boxes or meet minimum accreditation standards. Her curiosity, self-reflection, and respect for the interdisciplinary expertise of the team she has gathered have led to numerous short-term efforts and a solid foundation for long-term initiatives.”