Faculty Book Club: *The Courage to Teach* (Palmer, 2007)

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**Chapter 1—The Heart of a Teacher: Identity and Integrity in Teaching**

1. One adjective to describe your reaction to the first chapter.
2. Favorite quote from first chapter.
3. “We teach who we are” in times of darkness as well as light.
4. As a teacher, who do you most resonate with, Alan or Eric, and why?
5. How can the teacher’s selfhood become a legitimate topic in education and in our public dialogues on educational reform?
6. How can educational institutions support the teacher’s inner life, and should they be expected to do so?
7. Intellectual, emotional, spiritual?
8. How do you experience the terms identity and integrity?
9. “Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness.”
a. The 3rd Annual Student Success Conference-what did the U.S. Professors of the Year discuss that supported this assertion?
10. What is the quality/nature of your mentoring relationships now?
11. Can you recall what evoked you about your discipline? When/how you knew you had been chosen by your subject?
Chapters 2-4

1. Which chapter resonated with you the most and why?
2. What do you see as your students’ biggest weakness? How do you confront it? (Zoe)

Chapter 2—The Culture of Fear: Education and the Disconnected Life

3. How and why does academic culture discourage us from living connected lives?
4. Do you recognize fear in your students? What are the manifestations of students’ fears? To what do you most often attribute the source of their fear?
5. What did you think about the “student from hell” story?

Chapter 3—The Hidden Wholeness: Paradox in Teaching and Learning

Activity: In pairs, describe one of your greatest teaching moments and one of your worst. Have your partner identify your unique gifts in the positive case and your liabilities in the other case. Talk about the paradoxes you see with the larger group.
Chapter 4—Knowing in Community: Joined by the Grace of Great Things

1. What model does your classroom/discipline look more like: the Objectivist Myth of Knowing or the Community of Truth? Other conceptualizations of “knowing?”
2. When teaching from an objectivist perspective, what do you perceive is at the center of the attention?

Chapter 5—Teaching Community: A Subject-Centered Education

1. How do you think millennial students would respond to the subject-centered model that Parker proposes? What features of their everyday lives would support or oppose this pedagogical approach?
2. What would it take to usher in a movement of this sort in your discipline/subject? Are there ways you can see modifying your teaching to be more aligned with subject-centered education? How?
Chapter 6—Learning in Community: The Conversation of Colleagues
(new topics, ground rules, leaders)

1. What role do/could the questions on page ? (at loc. 1997) have in the P&T process?
2. Describe the nature of collegial conversations about teaching and learning in your department?
3. If anything, what factor(s) inhibit(s) collegial conversations about teaching and learning in your department?
4. Activity: When I am teaching at my best, I am like a: __________. When I am teaching at my worst, I am like a: __________.
5. Clearness committee: Write-up, Open and honest questions only, Mirroring, Confidentiality²
6. What are your thoughts about allowing participant-observers in your classes?

Chapter 7—Divided No More: Teaching from a Heart of Hope

• Isolated individuals decide to live “divided no more”
• Discovery of others & communities of congruence are formed
• Communities start going public & receive critical critiques
• System of alternative rewards emerges & puts pressure on the standard

7. Are you able to pinpoint a phase of “the movement” for education reform that you are in?”
   Colleagues? Institutional leaders?

Concluding thoughts?

1. What is your personal “take-away” from reading the book and engaging in the discussions?
2. Will you do/think anything differently in (or out of) the classroom, as a result of participating?