

“10 Commandments for Applying to CPE” – Peter Yuichi Clark

The Rev. Peter Yuichi Clark graduated from the American Baptist Seminary of the West (GTU, Berkeley) and ran the chaplaincy center at UCSF Medical Center and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital (San Francisco, CA) until his death in 2019.

1. Submitting an application does not guarantee that you will be interviewed.

While some centers can interview every applicant, many Bay Area centers simply do not have the time to interview everyone. Therefore, they tend to be more selective. For example, UCSF reads every application (usually 50 or so) and interview roughly half that number to make up a cohort of ~10 students.

2. ACPE centers will always ask you the same questions on the application.

They all use the same questions and the same responses can go to each site. Spend time on your responses to those questions; remember, you're trying to convince program that you'd be a good candidate to interview. Be as transparent as possible. The length of the essays combined should be 8-10 pages, single spaced.

3. Don't apply to just one center.

You need to hedge your bets and you also need to give yourself options, in case you interview at a center and you sense that it may not be a good “fit” for you or the center determines you're not a good fit for them.

4. It's a two-way street.

You will be asked questions to see if you fit. It's also your chance to figure out if the people interviewing you are people with whom you want to work. Do they have something you want to learn. Realize that the way the supervisor conducts the interview gives you some insight about her/his supervisory style. And if you leave the interview and you think to yourself, “It doesn't feel right,” that's valuable information. Use CPE day to ask questions like: What are the strengths of your center? How do you work with your students?

5. Make sure the center is Accredited (ACPE for example).

This provides you protection as a student and due process. ACPE accreditation assures you that your rights as a student will be respected and that there is a level of quality in the training program. The ACPE website also lists accredited sites:

<https://profile.acpe.edu/accreditedcpedirectory>

6. How you dress for the interview communicates something about you.

Most CPE centers are housed in healthcare environments that expect professional attire. Dress up for the interview as though you could walk out of the interview and onto the floor of the hospital. This leaves a stronger impression. If taken into the program, you will receive more information about the centers' dress code standards.

7. It is and it isn't a job interview.

It is a job interview in that they want to see what kind of person you are and if you'll be a good fit for the program. You're trying to impress upon them that you would be a good student. In CPE, they want to know if you are a good student and if you are curious about yourself and how you provide good ministry. Do you have a sense of your weaknesses, your vulnerabilities, what you have left to learn, the things you know you don't do well. They want to know what you want to work on in CPE. It's an educational program; you likely will be asked about your strengths and weaknesses. The more you know about this, the more you sound open to learning.

8. Think about what you want to learn.

Have a sense of what your learning goals are. Use the ACP standards on their website to get an idea about how to formulate some learning goals in your mind. See section 3.11, Objectives and Outcomes of CPE. You don't have to have all of your goals figured out, one or two is helpful. This helps the educator figure out if they can teach you something.

9. An educator asks themselves four questions (or a variation of these) about every person that is interviewed:

- a. **Can I trust you with the people I am supposed to serve, hospital patients, people in a homeless shelter, where ever the CPE training is taking place.** Do I feel like you would be a good person to have work with the people our institution serves? If yes, move onto the next question.
- b. **Is there something I feel like I can teach you?** Do I sense you are open to learning and the sorts of things you want to learn about are things I can teach you.
- c. **Will I enjoy being with you?** After all, I'm going to have to invest a lot of my time and energy in you just like you are going to have to invest time and energy in me. If it doesn't feel like a good match, then maybe it would be better if you found another educator to work with rather than me. It's subjective yet relevant.
- d. **How will this person fit into the larger group?** Educators like to create a diverse learning group. The reason is that students teach each other as well as, if not better, than the educator teaches. A long-held axiom goes that: the patients are the best teachers, then your peers, and then the educator is somewhere down in the bottom. Diversity in all regards is considered. This includes learning styles of the students. It's an inexact art.

10. Students need to ask themselves four questions as well:

- a. **Is this a place I'd like to work and do my ministry?**
- b. **Does this educator seem to know something I need or want to learn?** If you don't think your going to learn anything from this person then, again, it's not a good investment of your time.
- c. **Will I enjoy being with this supervisor?** If you feel this person is a jerk or isn't listening to me or doesn't seem to take seriously what I have to say, those are good pieces of information for you to stay away from that person.
- d. **Am I ready for what this opportunity has to offer me?** That's a big hard question to ask. Some people get into CPE without giving enough consideration

about how much it demands. In most CPE centers you have to do on-call, you have long hours, you're on full time, you don't get paid much if you get paid at all, you're having to see lots and lots of patients, you're having to do homework, read, it's demanding, very demanding. If you have a family, your family has to be willing to make a sacrifice just like you're making a sacrifice. Have a good conversation with your advisor about this. This is an immersive experience. There's nothing about self-care in the CPE learnings and objectives. Self-care is your responsibility and your educator will likely talk to you about it.

11. (Bonus Commandment) A “no” can sometimes be a “yes.”

You may have your heart set on going to a particular center and you apply and you interview and they say, “no.” It can be very heartbreaking. At the same time, almost every person who I've (Peter) met who has been told no by one place and yes by another, has said, “Oh, this has been a really good fit for me. I'm really glad I got to go to *this* center.” CPE works well just about anywhere. If you're open to learning, you can be open to learning anywhere. You should still be selective and open to where the universe leads you to be.