

Introduction

I am Charmaine Tomczyk, director for the Coastal Carolina University History Project which collects oral histories from individuals who contributed to the university's growth and development. Today I am interviewing Dr. Edgar Dyer.

Eddie Dyer is the former executive vice president and chief operating officer at Coastal Carolina University. He retired in 2015 after serving as a member of the political science faculty since 1976. During his tenure, he also served in a variety of administrative positions at the institution, including Chair of the Department of Politics, Dean of the Thomas W. and Robin W. Edwards College of Humanities and Fine Arts, Vice President of university relations, University Counsel, Executive Director of the Coastal Educational Foundation, and a stint as Interim Director of Athletics at Coastal, as we prepared to add football as a sport.

He was the first recipient of the HTC Distinguished Teacher-Scholar Lecturer Award and has also received Coastal's Distinguished Teaching Award and the Student Development Award; he was inducted into the local chapter of Omicron Delta Kappa and is an honorary inductee of the CCU Athletic Hall of Fame.

He has served and continues to serve on the boards of a number of community groups to promote better local government and foster charitable initiatives. He is a past member of the United Way of Horry County's Board of Directors and currently serves on its Community Outreach Council. He was also appointed to Chair the County's Ride III Committee to improve roads in Horry County. He has served on community and non-profit boards for youth sports, medical care for the indigent and other charitable initiatives.

Interview Questions for Edgar "Eddie" Dyer

Tomczyk: Hi, Eddie. Thanks for joining us today to talk about Coastal.

Dyer: You're very welcome, Charmaine.

Tomczyk: You came to Coastal in the early 70s, I believe?

Dyer: '76 actually.

Tomczyk: OK. Can you tell me what it was like when you came here; why you choose to come to Coastal?

Dyer: Well I was finishing law school at the university and I had been to graduate school there, too.

Tomczyk: The University of South Carolina?

Dyer: The University of SC. I was working in the Institute of Government there as a research assistant. My specialization in law at that time since I had been in city planning and use law, zoning and all that. I had a job lined up in Charlotte that I was talking to them about and I was probably going to take. It was going to be interesting job. They wanted someone to do land use law just for the city in Charlotte and talking to them. One of the professors that worked at the institute there asked me to go down to his alma mater, Augusta College because they were looking for somebody to teach for a year.

I went down there and on my exit interview the president I guess they had scouted me pretty well, he said I understand you play golf. The president said, "Well, I am an honorary member of the Augusta Nationals where we play the masters which is right next door." He said, "I can take you over there once a year to play." He said "You know we have a golf course here on campus (old army base, used to be). You will be a member there automatically and a member of the faculty." And he said "If you want a job at the Masters, we can get you a job working mornings and watching golf in the afternoons or the opposite whichever you want to do."

Tomczyk: You didn't have to do much negotiating did you?

Dyer: I did not. So riding back on Interstate 20 from Augusta to Columbia where I was living. I thought well that's where I'm going to be next year.

So about a week later they came in and said how about going down to our Conway campus Coastal Carolina and interview for the same thing you interviewed for at Augusta College. I said "No, I'm going to Augusta next year. That's a pretty good deal." They said "Well just keep peace in the family; it's a branch campus. Go down there and interview. A free day at the beach; they will pay for you to stay overnight. Just go down there and interview."

Tomczyk: Had you seen the campus before?

Dyer: Never seen it. I'd never seen it.

Tomczyk: Had you been to the beach before?

Dyer: Yes, my family started coming here after Hurricane Hugo [Hazel?] wiped out the place we used to go in North Carolina. In the mid-50s my family started coming to Myrtle Beach, so I had been coming here for years. I knew there was a branch campus here, I didn't know where it was.

So I came down. The first person I met was Joe Wightman who was the old a ...

Tomczyk: History professor

Dyer: history professor had been president at Erskine [College in Due West, SC]. He retired but he was still teaching here and was dean of humanities and social sciences.

Tomczyk: And English as well

Dyer: Well that would be humanities; that was part of humanities...

Tomczyk: Well I mean he came from Great Britain.

Dyer: Yes, he was British.

Dyer: He fought in World War II. He was with Montgomery's troops in North Africa.

Tomczyk: A very distinguished gentleman

Dyer: A very distinguished fellow. Played a good bit of golf with him.

I met him and he introduced me to a Swiss fellow Bruno Gujer and a Greek fellow Jim Farsolas and the woman who taught psychology, um I've forgotten her name...

Tomczyk: Thomasko.

Dyer: Thomasko. Martha Thomasko. She was Hungarian I think. So I was thinking a little bit "Not many Americans on the faculty here, Joe." [Smiles] But anyway it was good. Then he took me over to introduce me to Paul Stanton who was from North Carolina. And Dick Singleton who was the Chancellor. Paul Stanton was the vice chancellor of academic affairs. I met those two and they walked me around. They introduced me to Gerry Boyles and some other guys.

You know the job at Augusta paid more money; came with some pretty nice perks. The job in Charlotte paid a lot more money and was in my field, but I have to tell you - coming here was one of the decisions in my life that I made with my heart instead of my head. I just liked the people. I just felt comfortable with the people.

Tomczyk: Well when you say they walked you around. I 'm trying to get a sense of this interview.

Dyer: Four buildings. I interviewed in Kearns Hall. That's where Dr. Wightman's office was with the History faculty. They walked me over to the Singleton building and the back of Singleton was being worked on at that time.

Tomczyk: probably for the library

Dyer: the addition to the back.

Tomczyk: Atheneum Hall. Did you eat at the CINO Grill?

Dyer: No, I don't think I had a meal here. I think I might have come after the lunch when classes were not in session. Nobody here. Yes, Atheneum and half of what's now the gym.

Tomczyk: Williams-Brice

Dyer: Just Williams-Brice Just the gym part was there, they added the other later. Those were the buildings. And there was a little brick house where the photography people are now which is where our night watchman lived, Clyde Overcash... Quite a character.

Tomczyk: with his family

Dyer: with his wife and step daughter I believe. Occasionally they would argue in the evenings.

Tomczyk: Well, there was nothing out here in the evenings, was there?

Dyer: That's right. You come out here in the evening you'd see a flashlight every once in a while. It was Clyde going around checking the buildings. So that was about it.

Tomczyk: So Coastal couldn't offer you any golf package because we did not have the Quail Creek golf course at that time.

Dyer: We did not, no, but they had faculty rates there at the Myrtle Beach Farms or Burroughs and Chapin courses. They gave us a discount. It was OK. That was why I came here I liked the people I met. It seemed like a good fit. But I was only coming for one year. It was a one year instructor contract.

Tomczyk: Oh, OK – so it wasn't your heart that said one year, it was the contract that was given to you that was for one year.

Dyer: No, Well, I came here thinking that I would probably teach here and maybe stay in this community and practice law. But they asked me to stay another year. And they did a national search and didn't find anybody who wanted it and asked me to stay and they promoted me to assistant professor, Tenure track at that point.

Tomczyk: And then did you get summer work as well?

Dyer: Didn't want it.

Tomczyk: Because you really didn't go into your training to be a teacher, right? You wanted to practice law.

Dyer: Well, yes, that's right. That's correct. I did not take any education courses which was I think to my benefit. [Laughter] I walked in with all the bravado and confidence of youth to my first class, first day. I took roll. I went over the syllabus that I had prepared. I told them everything I knew about that course, about politics and government in general, about law, about public administration and about life and I had used about 30 minutes. At that point, it dawned on me "this is a challenge. It's more than just coming in and talking." That's when I learned about politics and government and public administration and law and life when I had to teach it.

Tomczyk: And speaking of challenges, like many of the faculty early on at Coastal they had other things other positions that were thrust upon them, coaching, committees. Could you talk about some of those that might have been more challenging than others?

Dyer: I think the coaches got a little bit of a stipend. I know Dan Selma came and was athletic director and coached baseball and basketball and taught fulltime geography. Everybody pitched in. I mean nobody really whined about what they were paid or how much work they had to do. It was a group feeling. The one good thing about Coastal is - in those days there were no prima donnas. We acquired a few over the years and moved some of them along and some of them are still with us.

The thing I liked about Coastal is that there were no prima donnas. No one thought they were better or should be at Harvard. We all realized we had a job to do. We had to keep building this small shell of a campus and get a good reputation for teaching and for being positive and not running students off. We all realized what we needed to do and basically did it.

I remember once we got new desks for about three classrooms. A truck pulled up in front of Kearns Hall; Opened up the back and Dick Singleton came over and came through Kearns Hall and said "Hey, Come on out. We need you guys to help us offload some desks here." So we just – academicians walked out and started offloading and carrying desks up the flight of stairs to the second floor of Kearns Hall. Things like that just - I mean you didn't think anything about it. You just did it.

Tomczyk: I think there was a real dedication from those early faculty I think, a lot of them made the decision from their heart to come here because they saw the potential.

Dyer: Yeah. It was good people. Yes, the place did have huge potential and we knew that. A lot of us were about the same age. We were all you know of the early boomers born in the late 40s early 50s.

Tomczyk: So you had common interests and values.

Dyer: We had common interests and had a lot of the same experiences.

Tomczyk: When we talked about the Coastal family it really was a family because you depended on one other because there was so much to do and so few of you to do it.

Dyer: So few resources and not a whole lot of money. Yeah it was family. In those days I think I was the 91st or 92nd member of the faculty. In those days most of the faculty, I knew their names, and their spouses names and their kids names and maybe their dogs' names. It was a pretty close-knit group.

Tomczyk: it was very close-knit. As I recall since I worked in the library, and there were single women in the library.

Dyer: No?!

Tomczyk: Yes. They would often look to see who the new faculty rosters held for them and I believe you were always on that list. And come to find out there was a wonderful theater professor who came to Coastal and so you built another family didn't you?

Dyer: I did. I did.

Tomczyk: Tell me about Cynthia [Hodell, his spouse] and your meeting her on campus

Dyer: She was here two years before we spoke really.

Tomczyk: You were in very different departments.

Dyer: Yeah. Her hours were different. She was over her at nights rehearsing play and all of that. She is from Cincinnati, came here from Boston University with her MFA degree and had gone into directing. I'm trying to think of the ..., Geena Davis, played Thelma in Thelma and Louise? ..., she and Cynthia were classmates in Boston University. They were both tall thin blondes and but they both went for the same roles. And Geena Davis always got the roles. Cynthia said "Well maybe acting is not my thing, maybe I should go into directing." So she went into directing which is why she came here. They were looking for someone to teach theater and speech and direct plays. So that's how she got here.

We went out on kind of a group date. Mary Kay Murphy who became Christian Murphy was her roommate, Cynthia's roommate. They had a house down in Surfside. Mary Kay said "Let's go out this weekend. I think I'll ask Bob Robinson who was a philosophy professor here if he wants to just go out and eat." Why don't you ask somebody? Cynthia said "Well I'll just ask...Eddie Dyer."

Tomczyk: just pulled a name out of the hat?

Dyer: yes, pulled a name out of the hat but she said she told Mary Kay "but you know I don't know him and you know him, so why don't you call him." So I got a call from Mary Kay saying "Me, my roommate Cynthia and Bob Robinson are going out to eat. Why don't you come with us." And I said "Why sure"

She taught another year or two until these little midgets started appearing around the house from somewhere.

Tomczyk: Two beautiful midgets.

Dyer: They are, thank you.

Tomczyk: and successful now, too.

Dyer: They are. But you know they took a lot of time so Cynthia decided to be mother until our youngest started school herself.

Tomczyk: That's wonderful if it can be done. I'm glad she was able to do that.

Dyer: Those were busy days and nights. She and my daughter started school at the same time. We dropped my daughter off here at Waccamaw Elementary over here. Dan Selwa's wife, Jan, was her teacher so we stayed a little while and talked. We continued on to Columbia that day and started seminary. They had a Methodist track. She was up there during the week for the first two years then part time the next two, to become a Methodist minister.

Tomczyk: Wonderful. And she did that for several years, too, didn't she?

Dyer: She did that for about ten or eleven years. What she is now doing - she has a choir she started when I retired called the Threshold Choir. She has about 15 or 20 women. They are rehearsing tonight. They rehearse two days a week. They go out in groups of two or three and sing to people who are dying in hospices and hospitals and homes. I think Friday and Saturday they have seven- I call them gigs, maybe I shouldn't.

Tomczyk: Events.

Dyer: Friday and Saturday. They are rehearsing tonight. They rehearse on Tuesdays. A couple of weeks ago they sang to actually a family who called and said "Could you hurry up here?" They sang to a woman. She died after a while, after the second song. The family was very appreciative. All smiles.

Tomczyk: I'm sure they were. Beautiful. How wonderful that she can use all of her talents, her formal training and her experiences to culminate into giving back in that way.

Dyer: Yep, something I couldn't do, but I'm glad they're there.

Tomczyk: Well in a way you have. I want to ask you about your official roles and your unofficial roles at Coastal. Because while you held many different positions, some that were thrust upon you others that you sought after or felt good about tackling. There was always a sense that you were available for the staff and faculty to approach you for advice about a variety of things particularly since you have a legal background and know a lot about - because you held a lot of administrative positions, you know a lot about how things work at Coastal. So can you talk a little bit about those kinds of relationships and maybe some circumstances without divulging any confidential information?

Dyer: Well, there were a good many and still are and I wrote a couple letters yesterday for four students for jobs. There are a lot of things that professors and educators do that are not classroom related so I still do those things and I love doing them. Glad to help. I love to see our graduates get jobs. Glad to help. Faculty and to some extent students with legal issues. You

know, I was paid Ok when I was here so I got by on what I was making. It was fine. So I didn't feel the need to make money practicing law. I felt like I really didn't need to charge people. People would come and have questions of one sort or another. They had to do with ... maybe their kid had gotten into some trouble and I could advise them on that or I would advise them on what attorney I would use. There were a good many domestic relations issues with divorce, unfortunately, and things of that nature to advise people on. With parents dying, there were wills and estates to administer. You know, it was things that I seldom had to go to the courthouse for maybe a couple of times go to the courthouse. Most people would want to know if they had a problem and I would tell them if they had a problem and tell them how to solve it or tell them where to go to get it solved.

Tomczyk: But I think it speaks volumes for you that they understood you had an open door policy and felt comfortable enough to come and talk to you about what was often very personal and sensitive issues to them.

Dyer: It was and I always made it clear that anything they told me was confidential and privileged and students the same way. Our students were very creative there for a while how they could get the attention of the North Myrtle Beach, Myrtle Beach and Surfside Beach police. I spend some time in the evenings and the weekends in those particular jails.

Tomczyk: You were a familiar face.

Dyer: And from time to time a faculty or staff member, not to put it all on the students. I would go down and I would work them through the getting out of jail process. It was – I won't say it was fun- it was interesting. I always said I never got up out of bed in the morning and dreaded going to work here. All those things I was doing were also kind of interesting and people related and I guess it satisfied that side of me that likes to be a helper.

Tomczyk: I think it adds to the definition of family.

Dyer: Yes, I was a family attorney.

Tomczyk: That's right and I think that's how you were viewed as well. I usually ask interviewees some general questions. And just for consistency I'm going to go through those with you as well you were asked many times: What you saw as the biggest change at Coastal over the time you were here.

Dyer: I think the faculty and staff are fairly constant. We've been extraordinarily fortunate to get good faculty. We are building on the foundation that Dick Singleton himself started which was put your energy into the classroom and serving the students and leftover energy into publishing and working with the community. But do those things, but your primary concern is the student so put your energy into your lectures. Don't bore people. Get prepared, go in and teach.

I've read a number of studies that say we retain about 5 % of the information we receive in undergraduate school. Five percent. It might be a little high for me, I might have had 2 or 3 %.

But 5% .The thing that I always liked for students to come out of my classes' experiences not so much the information I imparted that was important; there were things they needed to know about the Constitution, about politics, law and public administration, those courses I taught - things they needed to know. But the thing I liked to engender in them was the joy of learning it and finding out how much they didn't know so they would start learning it as they needed to - to become good citizens. And that's why we educate people really. That's why we spend so much money to keep our democracy and have good citizens. So that part of it has been constant. We still have really good, energetic faculty who for the most part do a good job in the classroom with interesting people and the subject matter and learning the program. So that has been a constant.

Our staff, we have had wonderful staff here. I'm not going to tell you 100% but most of the staff will come in and do their job. They care about students and they care about Coastal. So those things have been constant.

Of course the growth is something that happened. When I came there were four building and that little brick house. And now there are what 70 - 80 primary buildings and the dorms. That part has changed.

The makeup of our student body has changed. That is the one thing I've seen that has changed Coastal probably more than anything else. When I came here most all the students were South Carolinians and a huge chunk of those were Horry County-ites. This was looked at still when I came in '76 as the place to go for a year or two then move on to South Carolina in Columbia.

Tomczyk: Well you had to. We were a two-year institution, right?

Dyer: No, we became four year in '74. It had been a baccalaureate institution for a couple of years when I got here. The perception of Coastal still hadn't changed in the community. It was the place you went to then move on to a bigger college. So a lot of our students came from Horry County. Most of our out of state students were athletes. Most of our international students were athletes. For a while we had the Icelanders coming here to do soccer then the Irish coming here to do soccer. We had a lot of out of state. At one point we had the number one amateur player from like Argentina, Egypt and Sweden maybe on our team here.

Tomczyk: In what sport?

Dyer: In tennis. So our tennis team was kind of international and we had Canadians on our golf team. I'd say most of our international students were athletes and most of our out of state students were athletes. The makeup of our student body is the one thing that has changed I think the most. About 45 % of our student body are true South Carolinians now. We can claim more than half but the 55% that come from out of state initially then became South Carolinians. Our student body is all over the east coast now. And there is nothing wrong with that.

Tomczyk: How has that changed the culture?

Dyer: It has changed the culture in that... well here is one example. When I was first here- The first five years I was here, I'd say until the early 80s, we were an NAIA school instead of NCAA and the gym held about 1200 people in bench seating before they changed over to the Kimbel Arena – the old one. If you went to a basketball game it would invariably be full. When we played Newberry, Charleston, Francis Marion and Wilmington we could turn people away at 1200. The student body in those days was like somewhere between 1600 and 1900. When I came it was 1600. So it grew. 800 of those 1200 in the gym would be students. So close to half of our student body was coming to a basketball game. If we did that now we would have 5000 students coming to basketball games and football games. So school spirit, you know we might have 500 students at a basketball game on a good night and 1000 to 1200 at a football game.

Tomczyk: Do you think that's because there is just more choice of sports to attend?

Dyer: I think we recruit a good portion of our student body now from the East which college sports is secondary there to professional sports and I don't think there's that... uh... Most of the kids here were from Horry County and this was a Horry County school and so it was sort of like a continuation of their high school. I mean it was a place that they invested a lot of pride in and wanted to see their athlete team do well. So I would venture to say we had as many students at baseball games in those days as we do now and the student body is at least five times bigger.

So that's one thing that the - not only the family feeling amongst the faculty - there was a close knit feeling among the student body in those days. I don't think that's here. It's also waned a bit with the faculty. Of course it's grown; that accounts for most of it now. I don't think it's intentional. The faculty are still helpful. They don't know their dogs' names or their kids' names. That's the one thing I see.

Another thing I see that's a big change... even though we complain about it we get a lot more money now than we did from Columbia. Because our budget used to go from Columbia [the Statehouse] across the street to the University of South Carolina. They took their part off the top and then they came to us.

Tomczyk: It's another layer.

Dyer: We paid a franchise fee. We get a lot more money now from Columbia. I think we are teetering a little bit on the edge of getting too far away from our core academic function in a lot of instances. There are a lot of things that we are doing here to drain the energy and the attention of the faculty and students away from our core academic function. I think that should be changed as well.

Tomczyk: Well that's a big challenge. How can we reverse that if that's what you think is needed?

Dyer: Well and I don't say this with any personalities involved, but it's been a while since we had a chief academic officer who just wanted to be the chief academic officer. The last-- I don't

know how many in memory – are either Presidents-in-waiting or they have taken on other supervisory tasks... uh...

Tomczyk: Other units of the campus...

Dyer: Other units of the university. In some instances to increase their salary; in some instances just to increase their power base. In my estimation, until we have a Provost who only wants to be a Provost.

Tomczyk: And focus on academics...

Dyer: Doesn't even think about being President – just wants to be an academician. Doesn't want to raise money, built a legislature all of that; just wants to deal with the deans and the faculty. Until we have a chief academic officer who is just a chief academic officer and deans who are just deans. All of our deans now have "and vice President" in their title; dean and vice president.

Tomczyk: Of Outreach and of Research...

Dyer: I'm not targeting them individually, I'm just saying until you have individuals who get out of bed in the morning and come to Coastal and think about only one thing improving the place academically and not about how many more people have to be hired in public safety, or who is cutting the grass, who is running the dorms, all of that. Somebody else can do all of that. Until we have a chief academic officer who comes to work and deals with deans who come to work *just for academics*, I don't think we are going to improve. I think that is negatively impacting our recruiting now because it works its way down.

Dave DeCenzo and I declared upon our taking office in 2007 that we were putting a target on the back of the College of Charleston. They were the number one public comprehensive in South Carolina. That's what we wanted to be and the decisions we made were to move towards that. We were getting there. But we now sort of flattened out.

Tomczyk: And why is that?

Dyer: In my estimation we are getting away from our core academic function because people who should be administering academics are being, uh spreading their energy over too many other things.

Tomczyk: Well it's really going back to what Singleton wanted, right? Was to be student focused on academics?

Dyer: Yes. Exactly. Here again, there's no personalities involved the current people in those jobs aside. If other people came into those jobs tomorrow it would be the same. Until we have a Provost whose only job is to improve the academic standing and reputation and student representation for recruiting at Coastal Carolina University, we are not going anywhere. If that

person came in and dealt with his or her deans daily on... What are we doing today? What are we doing to move things along? What are you doing with your faculty to interest students?

Because I think a lot of our retention problems or attrition problems, whichever way you want to categorize it, has to do with a lot of students coming here especially those with 1200 SAT and above are not being challenged. Exit interviews have told us that. The better students leave because they are not challenged. They are not given homework to do and their peers in the class are not pressuring them.

Tomczyk: It's been impressive that we can recruit them and that they are interested in coming to Coastal but we don't retain them.

Dyer: We don't retain a good many of them. We can get them here because we have good scholarships. Some of our programs are rigorous; some of our programs wash a good many out. Some of our programs are rigorous but generally speaking a lot of our better students are not coming because they don't find it challenging. That's... that's... Some lightbulb should be going off somewhere – wait hey we should do something about that.

The students we retain most are between 900 and 950 on the SAT. That's our best retention area. So those are the ones that are being challenged and that's pretty low down on the scale that to be challenging. You should be looking for and retaining up around 1100 where Charleston is and we wanted to get there at one time.

So I really do hope when the administration – probably it's not a good time to do that right now, but when we get a new President it might be good to at least advise that person that - look if you are going to take the institution up you need somebody who does nothing but academics.

Tomczyk: They need to look at the organization chart and the duties.

Dyer: Yes, and I'm sure they will. I'm sure they will. Hopefully we will have academics. That will be where our first thought when we get extra money expend goes. You walk down the hall and ask the Provost "I just got an extra million dollars can you spend that to make it better?"

Tomczyk: and they would know because they are connected with their deans and the academic programs to know exactly where it should go.

Dyer: Exactly, so that to me, that's my soapbox speech for the day.

Tomczyk: I think it's an all-encompassing change and a challenge for the university going forward if we want to retain our original core value and expectation of our business which is education.

Dyer: Exactly. When I came here we pretty much has an open admissions policy. We used to joke about the mirror test. We took the mirror under there [motion under his nose] and if it fogged up

Tomczyk: they were accepted [laughter]

Dyer: they were breathing.... They were in. Gradually we changed that and we were moving towards that all moving up. And our retention was going up. Right around 70% when I was retired and that was intentional. So two intentional things that I - and Dave as well - it started actually before Dave - getting our minority percentage of our student body to more reflect the minority population of the state which we were pretty close to, the state was like 24% and we were like 23% somewhere around there. That was intentional. We did that. And the other thing was retention. And we offered financial incentives to the faculty. And it was working. That's sort of backing off. I don't know the reason for that. I'm told that there's a national trend that's having problems with recruiting and retention but I don't know that.

Tomczyk: It really does have a ripple effect on the whole culture of the campus when you are not student centered.

Dyer: Of course it does. Sure every 89 cents out of every dollar we spent is from tuition. They are the ones who if you want to - our current President has make an analogy between higher education and business and talks about students as customers. If you have customers who are giving you 90 cents out of every dollar you're spending ...

Tomczyk: who is being satisfied and served there?

Dyer: Yeah. And it's not like you have to please them but you at least have to challenge them and make them feel and know that their money is being well spent because you're improving; there is value added from the time they get here and to the time they leave. I don't know that a lot of our students are feeling that. Certainly the better students who are leaving because they weren't challenged weren't feeling that. They didn't feel they had value added during their time.

Tomczyk: I have actually heard that from students as well that they were not challenged. So if you think about Coastal in the future, obviously what you just said gives me a picture of where you would like to see it going and how it would be running. Is there anything else when you think about Coastal 25 or 50 years from now that you would like to see?

Dyer: Yes, I would like to see it level off at not more than 12,000 students.

Tomczyk: which is where the Board has said, right?

Dyer: Well, they kept moving it up. I started making two arguments when I became executive vice president. My first argument was "let's stop at 10,000" then it was Ok this piece of property here can probably hold about 11,000

Tomczyk: In terms of residence halls.

Dyer: In terms of residence halls and livability. Ecologically, environmentally livability, traffic classrooms. I think 12,000 is it, hopefully. Unfortunately when we do something like move to a bigger athletic conference we need more money and

Tomczyk: And if tuition driven you need more students.

Dyer: Exactly. So 90 cents of the dollar that you are going to be spending for that new expenditure is coming from tuition. You either raise tuition - usually we raise tuition and bring in more students. If the qualifications of your pool of students for grade point and SAT is not going up. If you are having to dip down lower to take in more students, then the quality of your student body is not improving and your faculty knows that.

Tomczyk: And they have voiced that at several meetings

Dyer: They have voiced that quite often that the quality of the student is not where they would like for it to be.

Tomczyk: And they know that from their classroom scores in English and Math.

Dyer: They know it immediately after the first exam, I can tell you. The faculty are front line, they are the *boots on the ground* I guess is the common parlance now. They are your front line and they can tell you and they have told us that they are not all that pleased with the quality of students they are getting.

So my issue is let's draw the line at 12 and don't take on any more big athletic expenditures or other expenditures that really are ancillary to our main thing here which is academics. Let's don't do that. Let's draw the line at 12. Be happy with the money we have and appropriate it to improve us academically. If you draw the line at 12 and keep expanding your recruitment base then your numbers are going to go up. Your SAT scores and you're going to get a better student. So let's quit at 12 and let's not try to get huge.

Tomczyk: Because there are a lot of colleges and universities who have focused on quality rather than the quantity of their campuses and are elite schools and some of these are even undergraduates not even getting into graduate as we have.

Dyer: Yes, and we have a two year institution across the street that takes the ones that probably need to go over there for two years over there before they come over here and that's fine.

Tomczyk: Our bridge program and other opportunities...

Dyer: Another thing I started telling the Board back in 2007, is we are spending too high a percentage of our budget on athletics. I was a jock. I was a student athlete.

Tomczyk: You were a basketball player.

Dyer: I was a basketball player I was on scholarship. I can't say I'm a sports fan. I'm an athlete. I don't watch a lot of sports, but I like sports.

Tomczyk: Well, you just told me you were in Kimbel Arena an awful lot watching those games.

Dyer: I was. I like Coastal sports but I don't like watching a lot of sports on TV. If it's teal, good, I'll watch. But I do believe we've gotten a little, especially jumping to this new conference I think we've gotten a little out of balance with not only what we are spending on athletics but our focus on athletics. I couldn't be more please about our winning the national championship. I'm very happy for Gary Gilmore; I'm very proud of him. I'm very proud of Coastal for doing that but we need to keep that in perspective. One of our problems is – and this is not personal with them – every board is like this. Most guys and females when you get on boards are not all that versed in or comfortable talking about academic stuff, you know.

Tomczyk: They are business people, professionals

Dyer: When you talk about budget – sure. When you talk about personnel sure, they can talk about that when you talk about those things. But if you talk about academics, you got these Ph.Ds. they are a little.... But they sports each and every one of them

Tomczyk: will rally up

Dyer: will come up to the table because they know sports and they can talk sports and they like talking sports. And so that's why you get sort of an out of balance on boards and in some institutions with athletics because your board can get excited about that. The academic stuff – well let the Ph.Ds. do that stuff.

Tomczyk: They don't need a lot of money?

Dyer: And well, they don't need a lot of attention. So it's not a criticism, it's just an observation over years of meeting with boards, seeing their interests peak when the athletic committee meets, you will see most of the rest of the board at that meeting. Athletic issues. I think at Coastal we just got a little out of balance.

Tomczyk: But Eddie, if we really move into some high power athletics won't that return funds to us? Things like contracts with big TV networks and that sort of thing? Wouldn't money come back?

Dyer: Maybe. Some money comes back. The Sun Belt conference has four bowls contracts. They are not big bowls, not ones you would recognize. But they are bowls and we get some money for that and we get a little more money from March Madness.

But we know we had to add 22 football scholarships to move up which means we had to add 22 on the female side. That's 44 scholarships. Our travel expenses. Instead of going to the Carolinas and Virginia, we are going to Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana. We got a lot more

expenses. But I hope that levels out. I hope our interest in sports brings more people to the games because you're not getting a whole lot of people at football and basketball games.

I hope we can get to the point where we can fill the stadiums up. But I hope the academic portion starts getting as much attention. It has to. If we are going to improve as an institution, I mean sure, sports... The reason we went from Division I from NAIA was to promote a sense of community – home campus, which basically we already had - to give alumni a reason to come back. We added football to homecoming, and the third was to get our name out more regionally and nationally and it has done that.

It was a good thing to move to Division I. I just hope that we will kick in an interest in and investment in academics to the same extent that we have athletics.

Tomczyk: And to that end, the Dyer Institute has done some of that. Can you tell me a little before we get to the closing questions, can you tell me how it came about and tell me why – well I think I know why you decided to create it - but tell me how it came about and how it is working out?

Dyer: It was actually an idea of Holley Tankersley's to do polling – was her initial idea and to have students involved in some polling things and also with some local, political leadership type issues. I knew nothing about it until they told me they were naming it for me. I was not a part of bringing it about. Martha Hunn. I think suggested we name it - Martha is a former student of mine. She thought there would be people who would give money to it if they named it for me.

Tomczyk: And that has probably turned out to be true?

Dyer: It has.

Tomczyk: And it's the Dyer Institute for Public Policy

Dyer: for Leadership and Public Policy. I am extraordinarily pleased with how Jacqueline Kurlowski has managed that operation. We have Dyer Fellows now who go to Washington and learn about national government and do projects – supervised projects. So, there are a lot of things they are doing. They are sponsoring some talks and I am very pleased. I rebelled a little bit when they first heard they were naming it for me and my first reaction was "I'm not old enough to have something named for me" and Martha and my wife said "yes you are".
[Laughter] So that went by the wayside.

Tomczyk: It sounds like the Institute is doing all the things you did when you were here as a teacher. You would bring students to Washington, DC and show them government first hand in action. You also got them involved in a lot of individual research.

Dyer: Local government largely. I like to see people involved in local government.

Tomczyk: To show them their civic responsibility. You are an excellent example of that. You lead by example.

Dyer: But the Institute itself was a big surprise and I really appreciate the people who endowed it and it continues to get gifts for the endowment.

Tomczyk: Well, to wrap up. I was looking at an article by Mona Pruffer – in the university newsletter that upon your retirement asked you what you were going to do in retirement and you said – and I quote:

“Nothing concrete. Books I’ve put off reading. And there are a few topics I want to write about. A little more golf than I’ve been playing. Other than that, just traveling a bit and spending time with Cynthia.”

How many of those things have really been fulfilled?

Dyer: Well within the past week – I’ve done all of those. I have a book I’m reading right now that sort of a panorama of articles from the 1960s which I lived through but a lot went on that I didn’t know anything about. And I, like most males, I was in a testosterone fog for most of that time.

Tomczyk: articles on history? Current events?

Dyer: A little bit of everything; current events, culture, the war, the Vietnam War, the assassinations that took place during that time. Just all the change that came to American society in the 60s and a good bit of change

Tomczyk: Well you were a part of that while it was happening so it’s interesting now in retrospect you can look at it with a much more mature eye.

Dyer: Yes, older, I don’t know about more mature. I did that this week. I played some golf this week. I spend a good bit of time this week – most every week with Cynthia - a lot of time on Valentine’s Day. Found the exact flowers I wanted. I’ve been looking for these flowers for a long time.

Tomczyk: Her special request or just flowers that you had in mind?

Dyer: It’s a flower that I think looks like her. And they come in various colors.

Tomczyk: Do you remember what they are?

Dyer: Alstroemeria.

Tomczyk: Alstroemeria. How lovely. Good for you that your request has been fulfilled.

Dyer: I finally found. There is this orange peach color that I call the Cynthia flower that color of Alstroemeria. I finally found for Valentine’s Day this year I finally found some red ones.

Tomczyk: How lovely.

Dyer: I'll show you after – unless you want me to show on camera, I'll show I took pictures of them to send me daughter. I found some red ones. I spent a good bit of time with Cynthia on Valentine's Day.

I have communicated this week with our Congressman on a couple of ideas. And with m state senator and my state representative on an idea for them to support a bill in the legislature that requires every college student to take a course in the principles of the American Constitution. It's actually a law now but Coastal Carolina University is the only institution in the state that has been abiding by that law for decades. It has been revised. Other institutions have found time...

The objections to that bill are that we don't have place –we don't have room in our curriculum for. If you look at any curriculum - especially the research institutions in South Carolina, they have a couple of required courses in globalism. So if they can find room for globalism courses in their required curriculum then they can find room for one course in the principles of American government. I encouraged our Senator and our Representative to get it out of committee sort out the language in committee now.

Tomczyk: It's a very timely topic given the global situation that we be aware of our own country and its laws.

Dyer: Yes, And the more people that are aware of the principles of their government the more likely they are to vote so it's very critical in a democracy a large portion of your population need to vote and... Education and knowledge about their government is a big factor in whether or not they are going to vote. I hope this bill will come out. I hope the governor will sign it. It's a good bill. I've done that and whatever the other thing I said I was going to do.

Tomczyk: You were going to write a little bit; a few topics to write about.

Dyer: Yeah I've written a little bit. But you know one of the things about having your name on an Institute, is that it's hard for me to come out with an opinion and take a side because I keep telling Jacqueline at the Institute, "stay nonpartisan." If we pay a speaker this year who is a liberal Democrat, then get a conservative Republican next year and we've done that. We are doing that.

Tomczyk: As a public institution, I think we are bound to show the various points of view.

Dyer: Balance. Balance. So I know Dick Singleton used to worry and fret about getting a DUI because his name was on this building. He really worried a lot about that. He wasn't a big drinker, but if he drank one beer after golf he would start worrying about someone pulling him. And he didn't want that to reflect on Coastal.

Tomczyk: I don't think that was a sense of pride, it was a sense of obligation, wasn't it?

Dyer: Yes, and I have the same. The reason I haven't written more op-eds - I used to write a lot of op-eds but now I have my name on this Institute. I don't want the Institute to be colored with my political leanings just because my name is on it. And people would. If I start writing op-eds saying I believe this and this, I think it would not be good for the Institute or the University to view just my political viewpoints.

Tomczyk: So you put upon yourself a responsibility that is really somewhat restrictive in your writing and your speaking.

Dyer: Right, it is but I can support Senate 43 – that bill because I think that helps everyone. That's not Democrat or Republican. That's just common sense. So I don't mind putting my name on that. But if I were to give my points of view on some things it probably would put the Institute over in that area and I fully refrain from that.

Tomczyk: Well I've enjoyed going through the years with you, Eddie. Is there anything else in particular that you would like to say about your time at Coastal?

Dyer: Well it's been wonderful. I had an angel on my shoulder the day I decided to come down here and the day I decided to stay. This has been a great run – a great place to work and like I said I never regretted it. There were stressful times in my career here over the years from time to time, but I still never regretted coming to work. Everything I ever did was for the purpose of trying to promote the well-being and the fortunes of Coastal Carolina University so one way or the other I was able to do that by the end of the day at some point.

Tomczyk: And you have done that I think you've done a lot of good things for Coastal and many of them are hard-earned and at a sacrifice. I'm glad that your name is on campus on the institute even though it's not showing any bias. I think there's a lot not just showing on campus in its physical state but a lot the students and the alums. As you said earlier you are still in contact with the students to write letters for either graduate school or to get jobs. I think those are the lasting relationships that have made such an impact that you have been able to propel Coastal into the quality education that we had originally hoped it would be.

Dyer: Thank you, and the great thing about here - going back to my decision to come here was relational; was relationships. The great thing looking back over my career – 39 years here – being retired two years now, looking back, the great thing is relationships. I wrote articles that were published. I got awards here and there. I got something named for me but the wonderful thing out of all this has been the relationships with former students and family on the faculty and staff and in the community.

This is the one place, I've always like to said "Coastal is the Switzerland of Horry County." This is the one place in the county where all these factions around Horry County, different neighborhoods and places and waterway politics, and all of that - people will put that aside for Coastal Carolina University. This is the one thing that people will point to with pride and support in this county. So the relationships I've had out in the community have been great.

And I have tried to give back as much as I could. Things like Sharing The Ride 3 initiative and doing volunteer work for the Horry County Planning commission and other things I've done out there that Dick Singleton encouraged me to do. He specifically took me aside and said given your background coming from Columbia you have the opportunity to help a lot in the local governments.

Tomczyk: He saw the potential in you.

Dyer: Yes, and I took it to heart. I never did. I never turned anyone down for my time. It's been a really good place to work, it really has.

Tomczyk: We are glad you took the job. We're glad your heart led you here.

Dyer: Me, too.

Tomczyk: Thanks, Eddie.

Dyer: Thank you, Charmaine.