

College Entrance Tests Discriminate, Expert Says

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WASHINGTON—By emphasizing standardized scholastic aptitude tests, U.S. colleges and universities "may unknowingly be using wealth, race, sex and geography as a basis for admissions," a leader of a national student organization said Friday.

Joel Packer, legislative director of the U.S. Student Assn., testified with other experts on the first day of hearings by a panel examining standardized testing for the National Academy of Sciences' National Research Council.

The panel is addressing concerns raised by some minority groups, educators, and others that standardized

tests have assumed too big a role from schools to the workplace.

Packer told the committee that "there does not seem to be much disagreement that standardized tests, at all levels, discriminate against minorities and low-income persons."

He said such a correlation also had been found between family income and scholastic aptitude tests: The higher the family income, the higher the median test score. Easterners do better than Westerners on the same tests, he said.

Nancy Gaeta of the American Federation of Teachers testified that testing in elementary and secondary schools was necessary to discover students' learning problems. But, she

continued, "it is inappropriate to make comparisons between children according to some nationally set standard."

Richard H. McKillip of the U.S. Civil Service Commission's personnel, research and development center said that standardized tests were essential in determining which of 1.6 million federal job applicants would be hired each year.

McKillip said the commission realized that a "balance needs to be struck between the social problems and the need for a work force the government can get the most work for its dollars from."

The written test remains, "the single most valid method we have available," he said.