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By IRVIN MOLOTSKY Special to The New York Times

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 26 — William J. Bennett, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, has warned that a report last week of a modest rise in the average verbal and mathematics scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test possibly reflected a "bottoming-out that is not a cause for self-congratulations."

"I note the 'surge' of one point," Mr. Bennett said of the rise in the mathematics test result. "It is not a cause for trumpets."

After 18 consecutive years of decline or no change, the average S.A.T. score for seniors who graduated from high school this year rose two points to 426 on the verbal part of the test and one point to 467 on the mathematics part. Scores on the test, which has become a leading barometer for measuring the quality of the nation's schools, range from a minimum of 200 to a maximum of 800 for each part.

Mr. Bennett expressed regret that the number of people studying the humanities had eroded. While he did not link

that directly to the long-term decline in S.A.T. scores, it clearly was on his mind as he presented a list of things the endowment was emphasizing to encourage the study of the humanities — literature, philosophy, history and languages.

'False Notions of Careerism'

He said the erosion of interest in the humanities was caused partly by the spread of "false notions of careerism," a "lack of 'invitation' by teachers to students" and a surge of experimental courses that offered what Daniel J. Boorstin, the Librarian of Congress, called "presentism."

"We are not Luddites, we are not opposed to technology," Mr. Bennett said in disclosing that the humanities endowment would support a "children's media" program with a strong humanities content. The endowment-backed effort, he said, would put worthwhile material on television "in the marketplace of ideas to attract children's minds."

The humanities endowment has awarded three of five such planned radio and television grants to help pay their costs. Grants were awarded to these projects:

• A two-hour television program, "Tales of the Unknown South," which will include short stories by Edgar Allan Poe and others. The host for the program will be James Dickey, the author, and will be produced by South Carolina Educational Television.

• A drama, "Booker," based on the childhood of Booker T. Washington, produced by Avon Kirkland.

• A series of 100 radio programs, "The Spider's Web," dramatizing classic works by such 19th-century American writers as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. It will be produced by radio station WGBH in Boston.

Two other grants are to be awarded in October 1983, with the grants for the

project from the National Endowment for the Humanities totaling \$1.5 million. Mr. Bennett said the programs would be made available to both commercial and public radio and television stations.

Summer Seminars Planned

He also announced that the following college professors would lead summer seminars on their home campuses for high school teachers seeking to learn more about the humanities:

Walter Capps, University of California at Santa Barbara; "Religion in a Democratic Society: Tocqueville's 'Democracy in America.'"
William R. Cook, State University of New York at Geneseo; "Three Approaches to History: Thucydides, Plutarch and Bede."
Michael Cooke, Yale University; "Conrad, Ellison, Garcia Marquez: Estrangement and Self-Fulfillment."
G. Karl Galinsky, University of Texas; "The Iliad," "The Odyssey" and "The Aeneid."
Miriam Gilbert, University of Iowa; "Shakespeare: Text and Theater."
Sol Gittleman, Tufts University; "Three German Texts and the Road to Hitler."
W. Turrentine Jackson, University of California at Davis; "Classics on the American Frontier Experience."
W. Carey McWilliams, Rutgers University; "Federalists and Anti-Federalists."
Russell Peck, University of Rochester; "Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales.'"
Franz Schneider, Gonzaga University; "The Quest for Love and Knowledge in 'The Divine Comedy' and 'Faust.'"
James Shenton, Columbia University; "Classic Studies in American Ethnic and Racial History."
Frank Seaborn, Ohio State University; "'War and Peace': the Novel as Total Experience."
Lewis Simpson, Louisiana State University; "The Southern Novel as Historical Text."
Steven Tigner, St. John's College, Sante Fe, N.M.; "Plato's 'Republic.'"
Helen Vendler, Harvard University; "Lyric Poetry."

The program is to cost \$225,000 for next summer, with most of the cost going toward stipends to the participating high school teacher ranging from \$1,550 to \$2,125, depending on the length of the seminar.

Each of the seminars will accommo-

date 15 teachers. Mr. Bennett said that applications, which must be submitted by Feb. 1, could be obtained by writing to the Summer Seminar for Secondary School Teachers Program, Division of Fellowship Programs, National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C. 20506.

Mr. Bennett and the director of the endowment's education division, Richard Ekman, said that it was not the intention of the humanities endowment to encourage more students to major in the humanities, but rather to make the humanities more available to all students on college campuses.

Asked how this could be accomplished, they set up a hypothetical case in which a college faculty votes to restore a long-discarded requirement that all students study a foreign language.

It is conceivable, Mr. Bennett said, that the endowment would provide a grant to such a college to help ease the impact of a loss of students who might apply at a competing college that had no language requirements.