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Alito used group to show Reagan accord

By Guy Taylor
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Judge Samuel A. Alito Jr. cited his membership in a now-defunct Princeton alumni group in a 1985 application for a politically appointed Reagan administration position to prove he was in line with the administration's legal agenda, said the man who hired him for the job.

Judge Alito listed the conservative Federalist Society and Concerned Alumni of Princeton (CAP) in his application to become a deputy to Charles J. Cooper, who was assistant attorney general in the Office of Legal Counsel.

Democrats criticized CAP this week during Judge Alito's confirmation hearings for the Supreme Court.

"The only purpose of that essay was to satisfy the Office of Presidential Personnel that he was simpatico with the Reagan administration's legal policy agenda," Mr. Cooper said yesterday.

People with ties to CAP, meanwhile, say Democrats are using the politically correct environment of the Supreme Court confirmation hearings to smear the group by misrepresenting its ideology. The organization folded in 1987.

"It was a respected mainstream conservative organization," said Dinesh D'Souza, a native of India and conservative best-selling author who began his career as editor of CAP's magazine in 1983.

"The organization's criticism of affirmative action and race and gender preferences is being manipulated to make it look like the organization opposed minorities and women," he said.

On Tuesday, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts and other Democrats hammered Judge Alito with questions about his ties to CAP.

William A. Rusher, former National Review publisher and a founding CAP member, said, "Kennedy is trying to give CAP the worst possible reputation in the hope that some of that will rub off on Judge Alito."

"CAP was none of the things Sen. Kennedy is smearing it as being: anti-black, etc.," Mr. Rusher said in an interview posted on the National Review's Web site (www.nationalreview.com).

CAP was founded in 1972 by Princeton graduates seeking to expose a dominance of liberal ideas on the campus, Mr. Rusher and Mr. D'Sousa said.

When asked about CAP this week, Judge Alito said he had no recollection of the organization other than listing it in an essay portion of his 1985 job application.

Mark Dwyer, a New York lawyer and friend of Judge Alito, says he doesn't recall discussing CAP when the two roomed at Yale Law School from 1972 to 1975. But, he

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said, he could understand if Judge Alito supported the group because he participated in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) at Princeton, which had CAP's support.

Mr. Cooper doesn't specifically recall seeing the essay portion of the 1985 application. "I'm sure I saw his resume, but I don't remember seeing his essay of his political bona fides," he said.

"Keep in mind this wasn't a resume; it's not something that basically remains fairly stable just adding to it as you continue to add things that warrant mention on a resume," Mr. Cooper said.