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## Big increase in students choosing US universities

By CATHERINE BECK

HONGKONG students are leaving for the United States in ever greater numbers despite recent competition from other overseas destinations, according to latest consulate figures.

Up to September 30, the US consulate in Hongkong had issued 4,825 student visas this year, a 21 per cent increase over the same period last year.

This represents a significant jump from the "natural increase" of 12 per cent annually, according to Dr Glenn Shive, of the Institute of International Education (IIE).

Corresponding figures for Australia and Britain, while on the rise, do not show such a dramatic increase.

According to Australian consulate records, 3,472 stu-

dent visas were issued in Hongkong between January and September 30 this year, a 10 per cent increase from last year.

Hongkong travel document records show 4,853 student visas to Britain were issued in the same period compared to 4,193 in 1989, an increase of 16 per cent.

The Canadian consulate refused to release student visa figures before the end of the year, but a consulate spokesman said the numbers would be "similar to last year".

Mr Shive attributed this year's increase in part to "fallout from Tiananmen Square".

"It takes a while to apply and get accepted to a school," Mr Shive said. "Anyone who decided last year that they wanted to go to school abroad would be doing so just about now."

He said the Government had no one to blame but themselves for the fact that so many students had left, and were continuing to leave, for their education.

"Hongkong people want higher education, and the Hongkong Government has not supplied it," Mr Shive said.

"They're trying to change that now, of course. But it's rather late in the game, isn't it?"

He added, however, that a slowdown in the rate of increase was "long overdue" and welcomed by the IIE, which is supported by a grant from the US Information Agency.

The IIE today hosts the ninth annual US Universities Fair, attended by about 100 university representatives. The fair is expected to draw about 4,000 local students.