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# MedBlog

A health and medicine blog with **Cindy George** and **Todd Ackerman**

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October 26, 2009

### **Merger: Baylor would dwarf Rice, says faculty report**

A merger of [Rice University](#) and [Baylor College of Medicine](#) would create one of the most unbalanced academic institutions in the nation, according to an [interim report](#) by a Rice faculty committee.

The report notes that Baylor's operating budget is almost three times the size of that of Rice and says the attachment of a very small university to a large medical school could impact Rice's academic mission, culture and finances.

"The financial risks to Rice of merging with Baylor are significant and are amplified by the large size differential between the two institutions," says the five-page report, authored by a committee appointed by the faculty senate. "Small fractional changes in total revenue of the combined institution could have a large impact on funds available for Rice's traditional mission."

The report, dated Aug. 28 but only made public this month, says that for a merger to be approved, a minimum of \$250 million of endowment money should be raised in the next five to eight years to support both one-time seed funding and recurring expenses. It says the majority of funding for a merger should not come from Rice's endowment or borrowing.

The report's release follows the [September announcement](#) that the school's governing boards have extended merger negotiations through January. The schools first [confirmed the talks](#) a year ago.

The report stops short of recommending whether or not the institutions should do the deal but is decidedly critical, listing more risks than benefits, arguing that many (though not all) of the benefits could be achieved without a merger and setting out numerous conditions for a merger before adding that there's room for debate about whether it's worth the risk *even if* the conditions are met. Citing recent Baylor defections and contemplated departures, it also says it's possible that "the Baylor with which Rice would merge would be significantly weaker than the Baylor of a few years ago."

Still, the committee acknowledges that "Rice's standing as a major research university is in danger" and says joining with a medical school is one way to expand the school's research profile and visibility.

The report's conditions for a deal to be done also include that Baylor must find a strong, stable relationship with one or more adult private hospital partners and a satisfactory outcome for its [suspended hospital project](#) and associated debt that doesn't result in Rice owning a hospital or having liability from it; that non-biomedical related aspects of Rice must not be starved in order to support programs directly related to the medical school; and that an advisory team of experienced academicians and administrators must be brought to Houston to advise on the academic issues of implementation.

In true academic fashion, the report also calls for two more studies -- a comprehensive nationwide look at the academic relations between medical schools and the rest of the university; and an analysis of the

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