In response to "Rice-BCM merger to promote research," Nov. 6:

Professors West and Smith were entirely correct in their assessment of the proposed merger’s benefits. Bold steps must be taken if Rice is to become a true tier-one institution with broad international recognition. Thankfully, the current administration is already taking actions to achieve this goal, notably by increasing undergraduate enrollment (and therefore, the number of Rice alumni) and by stepping up recruitment of international students.

However, more significant actions must be taken. Acquiring the Baylor College of Medicine will lead to an almost immediate increase in Rice’s profile and standing in international university rankings. Of course, the merger poses short-term administrative headaches and risks. However, given that a large proportion of BCM students are themselves Rice graduates (myself included), and that there are numerous Rice alums working at BCM as physicians and researchers, the proposed merger would not precipitate an inter-institutional culture clash. On the contrary, acquiring a top medical school staffed by like-minded students and researchers would do nothing but enhance Rice’s long-term academic mission.

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