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Folks to watch

The Negotiators

David Stern, vice president of health affairs and dean of the College of Medicine, University of Cincinnati. Stern recently withdrew from consideration for a job in California and is now the point person for University Hospital and UC. He has been all over town preaching the value of keeping University Hospital in a larger system.

Jim May, chief executive officer, Mercy Health Partners. Stern already is negotiating with May, the head of Mercy's five-hospital network in this region. May soon will have control over Jewish Hospital. He's offered to hire a consultant with UC to jointly plan further collaborations and offered \$50,000 signing bonuses to try to lure Health Alliance primary-care doctors at Jewish to the Mercy system.

The Corner Office

Lee Ann Liska, senior vice president, University Hospital. Liska runs University Hospital for the Health Alliance. She'll bear the consequences of keeping the hospital's programs at full force as the system folds. She'll also have to find tens of millions of dollars to invest in the physical plant there.

Behind The Scenes

Stan Chesley, UC trustee. Chesley is the hidden hand behind the dispute, quietly lobbying policymakers to persuade Mercy and Jewish to delay their merger. He's trying to stitch together a system that would include University Hospital.

Gary Heiman, president, Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati. The foundation is selling Jewish Hospital, and Heiman has taken a hard line against any delay. He took the lead during 18 months of negotiations that culminated this summer in a contract with Mercy. Will it hold?

The Wild Cards

Richard Cordray, Ohio attorney general. Cordray's office will review the Jewish-Mercy merger, and he's already received plenty of requests to force a three-month delay. The 60-day review window opened Nov. 12 when he received official notice of the deal.

Greg Williams, new UC president. Williams only arrived on campus Nov. 2. Will he follow the hard line and demand millions of dollars from Jewish Hospital and Mercy Health Partners?

Will he commit UC to helping finance some of University Hospital's obligations? Or will he let Stern negotiate all of those agreements?