Some creative ideas break the mold. Others bypass the mold altogether. When John Lichtenberg became Chief Marketing Officer at Walsh College in Troy, Michigan, he pursued his enrollment objectives using the latter strategy.

College marketing appears 'homogenized' to Lichtenberg. Every college ad and web site abounds with smiling student faces. Having worked at Kelly Services in various executive positions, and in a marketplace with numerous competitors, Lichtenberg understood the importance of differentiation. Why would a shopper choose you if you looked like all the other choices?

So Lichtenberg tasked his advertising agency and their suppliers to help him craft a distinctive story and a personality for Walsh College, an undergraduate and graduate-level business school serving 4,500 students in Detroit and its suburbs. They were also asked to do it affordably.

"We looked for new ways to capture attention," Lichtenberg recalls. "It really wasn't that difficult."

How well have they done? Click and see if this 30-second television ad captures your attention.

"Our simplistic yellow pad is now our canvas," Lichtenberg says. "And we develop new messages for display on that canvas that set us apart." Click on this one, and see if you agree.

When you don't have to be all things to all people, you can focus on being the right thing for some people. For Walsh that pays dividends. "Alums and employers are telling us they love our new personality. Our studies show great improvements in brand and key message recall. A campaign that may appear at first to be somewhat whimsical is attracting and holding attention." See if this one holds your attention.

There are other activities like Walk-In Wednesdays, open houses and in-class presentations at 13 nearby community colleges that help keep admissions flowing at Walsh College. Affordable sticker prices are real, because there's no discounting at Walsh.

"I'm using Perich Advertising in Ann Arbor, and their services range from
strategy to execution," Lichtenberg shares. "I had familiarity with Perich in my previous role at Kelly Services. They're smart people, and they think well. For television animation Perich uses a London-based British firm called Bermuda Shorts."

By the way, could a yellow pad used abundantly with stick figures become a mold that some other college will eventually break or bypass?