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# Social Entrepreneurs Fund Scholarships For Young Women In Kosovo

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*I cover for-profit social enterprises and the people who fund them*

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**FULL BIO** 

Here's the story of one heck of a productive college study abroad experience.

A year ago, with the help of five scholarships, Ashley VanBuskirk spent the summer between her junior and senior years in college as a reporter in Kosovo. There she discovered how tough—if not impossible—it is for many young women to pay for higher education. When she returned

home, she and her twin sister Victoria decided to do something about it: While still in school, they co-founded a social enterprise to help fund college tuition for young women in Kosovo.

Called [Flora Stationery](#), the company sells journals sporting watercolor covers painted by a Kosovo art student. Forty percent of profits go to pay for scholarships; specifically, 25 journals fund one semester of college tuition for a young woman in Eastern [Europe](#).

VanBuskirk was enrolled at [Miami University](#) in Oxford, Ohio, studying journalism. As a rising senior, she spent the summer as an intern reporting for a local news organization in Prishtina, Kosovo's capital. Her last week there, she met a young woman whose story really moved her.

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A first-year college student attending the University of Prishtina, the young woman worked part-time to help pay for her living costs and tuition. Her family of five—her father had been killed during the civil war in Kosovo—lived an hour bus-ride away in a small village in the center of Kosovo. But with an unemployment rate of 55% for 15 to 24 years olds, her siblings couldn't find work. Result: She was trapped in a cycle of working full time and only being able to afford her school fees for one semester out of the year. At that rate, her six-year law program would take her 12 years to complete.



*Prishtina, Kosovo (Photo credit: Wikipedia)*

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When VanBuskirk came back to school, she researched scholarships, but the young woman didn't speak English well enough to apply. Then she and her sister, who was in her senior year at [Grove City College](#) in Grove City, Pa, started talking about how they could find a long-lasting way to help young women pay for their education. That's when they came up with the idea of using profits from a social enterprise selling school-related supplies to fund scholarships.

In the fall, Victoria worked with an entrepreneurship program at Grove City College to work out the details. They would sell 150-page, \$12 journals sporting covers decorated by Kosovo artists—specifically, two floral water color pictures by Besjana Kryeziu, a painting student at the University of Prishtina. (You can see more of her work [here](#)). To find scholarship candidates, the company would work with a local NGO that would vet young women in need. And in the spring, they launched a pilot, selling their journals on the Miami University

campus and online. In 48 hours, they made enough money to support a scholarship covering schooling for four years. (A year at the University of Prishtina is \$120 a year).

Since graduating—Ashley is living and working in Dallas and Victoria is living and job-hunting in Ohio—they’ve been selling just online. But they hope to run more pilots at college stores in the Dallas area. They also are going to sell journals with lined paper (the first two have blank pages) and are taking pre-orders for the new notebooks now. Ultimately, the plan is to expand to other areas, like Africa and the Middle East.

You also can contribute directly to the Flora Fund [here](#).

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