

Economic

Uzbekistan back from economic growth.

“Uzbekistan is a country that is, unfortunately, behind the curve in developing its markets. It’s a reflection of it being a democracy in name but not in reality. Scholars debate whether you can have free enterprise in a nondemocracy. (Uzbekistan’s) current political structure doesn’t seem conducive to a market-based economic system.”

Nonetheless, self-motivated teachers with jobs in K-12 and university classrooms absorbed memorable methods of economics education during the last week of March. They learned the steps of economics decision-making by using an apron with pockets for the problem, options, pros and cons and — at the top — the decision. They played with coupons marked as resources, capital and goods to visualize the interaction of

businesses and consumers.

They also unleashed a human instinct for competition and entrepreneurship.

“Here, in Uzbekistan, everywhere — everybody likes to talk about money,” MacDonald said.

During 67 years of communist leadership that ended in 1991, the people of Uzbekistan lacked the power to make their own decisions. “Nonetheless, everyone around the world has entrepreneurial instincts. It’s just camouflaged a little better in some places.”

Uzbekistan has potential to become a player in the world marketplace, MacDonald said. “This education really can help out.”

Unlike colleagues at other universities who have made up to 20 economics teaching trips, MacDonald plans to stay home for a while — but not because the adventure lacked gratification.

Tashkent may have lacked fast food, but MacDonald found something better: “That intangible thing that educators get when they know they’ve done something very special, when they know they have made a difference.”