Every day, students in Clark College’s baking program create an assortment of tantalizing treats. The program, located at the main Vancouver campus, teaches students the fine art of creating baked goods, as well as what it takes to be successful working in a bakery or pastry shop, or in bakery management.

Ian Titterton is the program manager. He’s been with Clark College for five years. Before that, he spent time teaching at several private culinary schools.

He said that the Clark program is unique in that it has a fully functioning retail shop on campus. “Because we can sell products, we can make large batches of it and have quality industrial stand equipment,” he said.

The most popular items at the retail store are doughnuts, Danish pastries and a dessert known as “mousse bomb.” It is a chocolate lover’s dream, with chocolate mouse layered over chocolate cake, and covered in ganache, which is a rich mixture of chocolate and cream.

Titterton said he gets positive feedback from potential employers in the Portland and Vancouver area about the Clark College students who intern or work at different businesses. They like our students because they have a good work ethic and their level of expectation is less than those who attend traditional culinary schools,” he said. “They know that they aren’t going to walk in there and expect to be managers right off the bat because they have a degree.”

Students in the program range from right out of high school to retirees looking to try their hand at something new.

“We have a great mix of ages, and that’s a good thing,” Titterton said.

Students who enroll in the program have the choice of taking just a few classes, earning a certificate of completion, or receiving a two-year degree in applied technology.

Those who finish the first year and the students need to succeed. It’s what makes us who we are,” Melissa Ayers is a first-year student from Camas. She said the baking program is a good fit for her skills.

“Before this, I’d tried seven different careers and none worked for me,” she said. “This program is one of the best around. It actually took me two years to get in because the classes were always full.”

Ayers, 32, enjoys the hands-on experience the program offers.

“I’m learning the whole system from start to finish,” she said. “I have experience in front and back of the house, but I never got to see the entire process.”

She plans on graduating from the program and going on to earn a bachelor’s degree.

“I’d like to open my own little coffee shop someday, but first I want to work in someone else’s restaurant and see how everything is done, because 87 percent of all food places go out of business in their first year.”

Ayers’ favorite area in the five-station rotation is the cake room: “It’s where I get to be the most challenged and creative,” she said.