Since the mid-1950s, Clark College’s Culinary Arts graduates have achieved significant success in the food industry as bakery and restaurant owners and managers, cookbook authors and chocolatiers. The food program had a twofold approach: it prepared students for the fast pace of restaurants and industrial kitchens and provided food service and catering to the campus community. The current facility, built in 1980, has had few changes in 35 years. A remodeled Culinary Institute will boast modern facilities, add a first-ever accredited program that focuses on skills and customer service and extend service hours offering local, sustainable food.

The design of the Culinary Institute involved the vision of local experts, architects, faculty and staff to craft a facility and curriculum that met industry and student needs. Today’s food business relies on fresh, farm-to-fork and sustainable foods that offer sensitive nutrition options. Clark’s new curriculum— which once launched will seek accreditation from the American Culinary Federation—embraces a balanced model of theory, skill development and production.

Clark College is the only state-assisted college within 122 miles of Vancouver offering affordable culinary education. Private culinary arts institutions in the area cost up to three times that of Clark College. In addition to experienced faculty and staff, visiting chefs and culinary experts will be invited to demonstrate their specialized craft.
Community Need

For more than five years waiting lists have deprived students of the opportunity to learn: courses have either filled or been over capacity. A booming food and beverage industry in the Portland Metro and greater Seattle regions puts Southwest Washington in a perfect position. As workforce needs increase to fill the rapid expansion of new restaurants and bakeries, Clark College is poised to fill the skills gap. Moreover, graduates of the new Culinary Institute will master the techniques for preparing foods and managing the dietary needs for an aging population. With baby boomers retiring at the rate of 75,000 per day, retirement communities are clamoring for culinary professionals who are trained in specialty cuisine and diverse nutrition.

Degree and Certificate

New to Clark College in fall 2016—pending state approval—will be a bachelor’s of Applied Management that Culinary Institute students will be eligible to enroll in. Course samples include menu development, food-cost control and local food sourcing. The program also offers a certificate of proficiency and an associate of Applied Technology in Culinary Arts. Individuals who graduate with a degree or certificate earn an average of 10 percent more income than non-graduates, according to the American Culinary Federation.

Another new component is morning and afternoon programs. Having two timeslots for courses will encourage student retention and course completion and allow for more robust enrollment.

Workforce Gap Placement

Clark’s culinary faculty routinely receive calls from restaurants, bakeries and corporate businesses requesting staff. Culinary Institute graduates will enter into a food and beverage industry that is expected to grow by eight percent in the next five years with 6,922 regional job openings. Clark will graduate 30 students annually to help meet these workforce needs and build a pipeline for placement to ensure graduates find suitable employment.

Donor Investment

Clark College is fully committed to reopening the Culinary Institute in its remodeled space based on the demand of the campus community and workforce. The college has committed approximately $620,000 from its reserve fund to cover the cost of architectural design and technology upgrades. Clark College Foundation is currently raising funds for this $7.4 million top-priority project.

Students will be job-ready, receive experience in a high-volume production kitchen and be equipped with the skills necessary to be successful. Remodeling is scheduled to begin January 2016 and be completed by September 2016. Community investment is urgently needed to meet this priority goal.

Clark College Foundation has undertaken the challenge of reaching out to the community and food service professionals, restaurant owners, institutional food service providers and other partners to fund this exciting project. Naming and community investment opportunities are available.