The landscapes of California and western Nevada have a long and storied past including plate movements, granitic intrusions, volcanism, and collisions of island arcs and continental fragments with the western US over the past 250 million years. The rocks and structures that we see at the surface and at depth record this history. Rocks are historical archives. One can read these archives of Earth history if one knows the language. The language is geology.

Major challenges in the 21st century, including climate change, energy, resources, water, and earth hazards, deeply involve geology. To function as an informed citizen, everyone needs knowledge of geology.