During the Fall of 1900, a group of MIT students asked President Dr. Pritchett to provide support for a team to play the recently developed game of basketball. Dr. Pritchett gave his approval soon after seeing over 30 men turn out for the first practice. With team support secure, they arranged a schedule with several local schools, ventured forth for their first game, and defeated Dean Academy, 21-1.

Most of Tech's early basketball history was uneventful, considering both the complexities of fostering a high-caliber hoop squad at MIT, as well as the dynamic changes in terms of rules and skill that have led to the development of today's game. The sport actually disbanded in 1912, only to return to the Institute in 1920 after popular student demand.

The first two head coaches, J.R. Allen and Ralph West, were only with the program for one season before Henry P. McCarthy, who was also head of the Physical Education department, joined the Tech staff in 1923. Owning a .424 winning percentage in 24 seasons, while netting wins against Boston College, Boston University, Harvard, and UMass, McCarthy (1923-47) is the longest tenured coach in the history of the program.

Tech teams did achieve moderate success during the late 1920's and early 1930's marked by seven consecutive winning seasons, including a 10-2 ledger during 1932-33. In 1937, Paul Schneider became MIT's first noted hoop star after receiving All-New England honors as a sophomore.

In 1952, after making a head coaching change for the fourth time in as many seasons, the Institute offered Robert "Scotty" Whitelaw its first full-time appointment exclusively hired to coach basketball. Whitelaw and his successor John Burke each coached the team for three seasons, although the Cardinal and Gray failed to deliver a winning record. The Engineers' greatest player during this era was Texas-transfer Dimitry "Dee" Vergun. The 6'4" center averaged 24.1 points per game during the 1955-56 season, and was named Honorable Mention All-America for the second consecutive year. Vergun, who was the program’s all-time leading scorer for many years, and teammate Bernie Benson were named Greater Boston All-Stars following the 1956 campaign.

The modern history of MIT basketball coincided with two significant changes: The hiring of legendary coach Jack Barry, and the Engineers' switch from Walker Hall to the confines of Rockwell Cage as their home venue. Barry took over his first squad in 1960, enduring a difficult season with a roster comprised mostly of freshman. For the next eight years, Barry commanded one of the best teams in New England. The squad set a school record for wins after recording a 17-4 ledger in 1961-62. After that season, Barry was named New England Coach of the Year and Dave Koch, who averaged 23.6 points per game, earned an All-New England citation. On February 17, 1962, Koch set an Institute record with 41 points in a win over Middlebury College.

While the Engineers kept their win total high in the early 60’s behind the efforts of Greater Boston League All-Stars Bill Eagleson, Jack Moter and Chuck Gamble, the 1966-67 squad established itself as the greatest team in MIT history. Paced by Alex Wilson, Bob Hardt, and All-New England Honorable Mention, Dave Jansson, Tech compiled an all-time best 19-4 record and was named ECAC Division III Team of the Year.

Jack Barry retired from his coaching post in 1972 after 10 winning seasons, a .580 career winning percentage and 162 victories. The program garnered few headlines during most of the 1970’s and 1980’s, although the Engineers did display glimpses of MIT’s proud past. In 1979, head coach Fran O’Brien was named New England Division III Coach of the Year, while Ray Nagem became the first MIT basketball player to earn Academic All-America honors. During a career that spanned 1972-76, Campbell Lange scored 1,699 points en route to the MIT scoring record, even though Harold Brown ’72 had set the record just a few years earlier with a brilliant three-year career. In the same class as Lange, Peter Jackson also enjoyed a stellar career despite garnering few postseason accolades. Jackson capped his career as the Institute’s all-time leading rebounder (954), while he established a school record with 43 career double-doubles.
In 1983, the team made national headlines with a basketball tour through India. It was the second international tour for MIT hoops, which also completed a successful European tour through Iceland, France, Luxemburg, Yugoslavia and Greece during its memorable 1966-67 campaign.

MIT began the 1990’s with a new focus and commitment toward basketball. Under the guidance of head coach Leo Osgood, Jr., the Engineers joined the Constitution Athletic Conference. Although the success of the team wavered during Tech’s brief run in the CAC, the team collected numerous individual awards. Keith Whalen and Melvin Pullen each earned All-Conference honors three straight years, while Dave Tomlinson’s tremendous season in 1990-91 was one of the most decorated in MIT history. Tomlinson was named Constitution Athletic Conference Player of the Year, Academic All-America, All-New England and was awarded with the program’s first NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship.

In 1995, MIT signaled Larry Anderson to take over the reins of the program. Two years after assuming the position, Anderson’s ability was confirmed as he led MIT to an 18-7 record and a 15-game turnaround from 1996-97. The 15-game swing in the win column was the best in the nation for Division III and placed MIT back on the winning track.

The Engineers joined the newly developed New England Women’s and Men’s Athletic Conference (NEWMAC) for the 1998-99 season. Craig Heffernan and Kyle Doherty were the only two players to earn multiple league honors during MIT’s first five years in the conference, although Heffernan’s accomplishments extended a little deeper as he was named Constitution Athletic Conference Rookie of the Year and was a two-time Academic All-America selection.

On January 12, 2002, point guard Danny Kanamori authored the only triple-double in school history as he totaled 12 points, 12 assists, and 10 rebounds against Springfield. Kanamori closed the year ranked third in the nation in assists per game. At the end of the 2002-03 regular season, Anderson set another benchmark after guiding MIT to the ECAC Championships; the program’s first appearance in a major postseason tournament. Backed by another nationally-ranked defense in 2003-04, Tech’s hardwood unit reached double-figures in wins for the seventh consecutive season, while completing its third consecutive winning campaign. The club was paced by Andrew Tsai, who finished eighth in the nation in three-point shooting.

One of the greatest players in MIT lore graduated in 2006 as Mike D’Auria led the Engineers to the most wins in school history and the program’s first victory in the ECAC Championships. D’Auria enjoyed an awards-filled postseason after a dazzling senior campaign on the court, including recognition as D3Hoops Northeast Region Player of the Year, D3Hoops All-American, and ESPN The Magazine Academic All-America. D’Auria, who was a three-time All-Conference pick, was also the first MIT men’s basketball athlete to be named NEWMAC Player of the Year.

Following the tremendous season in which the Engineers set a school record for wins with a record of 21-9 while reaching the conference final for the first time in program history, Anderson collected honors as NEWMAC Coach of the Year, and Jimmy Bartolotta capped accolades as the NEWMAC Rookie of the Year. That summer, the team traveled to Taiwan where MIT won the Kainan Tournament Championship against one of Taiwan’s professional teams.

While MIT boasts many great players throughout its history, no player can match the individual achievements attained by Bartolotta. A highly gifted player who has drawn considerable interest in the national media, Bartolotta became the program’s first 2,000-point scorer during his senior year. A two-time ESPN The Magazine Academic All-America, he broke numerous records during his career. On November 25, 2008, Bartolotta broke a 46-year-old single-game record as he scored 43 points against Curry. He was named to The Sporting News preseason All-American team prior to the 2008-09 season, and he currently ranks second in the NCAA in scoring (28.2 points per game). Bartolotta’s tremendous leadership and ability has made MIT the top three-point shooting team in Division III, while the Engineers head toward the finish of another potentially historic campaign. Along the way, MIT has been able to celebrate Anderson’s coaching legacy as he passed Barry during the year as the program’s all-time winningest coach.